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Christian Foundations

by

J. E. HARTZLER
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Lecturer

Hartford Seminary Foundation
Hartford, Connecticut

*"If the foundations be destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"*

Published

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1953

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To my friend
Dr. Ed. S. Kaufman
with
Compliments
J. E. Hartzler
March 25-1953

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by

J. E. Hartzler

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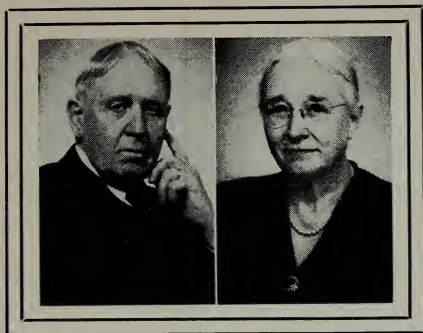
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THE HARTZLER LECTURE FOUNDATION



Dr. and Mrs. J. E. Hartzler of Goshen, Indiana, in 1951 established a perpetual lectureship at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, to enable this institution to secure annually the services of distinguished ministers and authoritative

scholars as special lecturers for the annual Bible Week at Bethel College.

These lectures are to be on subjects of general religious, theological, historical and philosophical interest. Particular emphasis is to be placed on spiritual values without sacrifice of scholarship. The lectures are to be educational, inspirational and evangelical and shall deal with basic principles of the Christian faith.

Dr. and Mrs. Hartzler are well known to the Bethel College constituency. They have formerly lived on our campus while Dr. Hartzler served as president and professor of Bethel. Dr. Hartzler is an outstanding lecturer and has taught in a number of colleges, seminaries and universities both in America and abroad. He has written a number of books, and has traveled abroad in many countries of Europe and the Middle East.

Bethel College is very grateful, not only for the establishment of this foundation, but also for the fact that Dr. Hartzler himself is serving as the first lecturer on the foundation. His series of lectures on this foundation for the school year 1952-53 is presented in this volume. It is herewith sent forth with the prayer that the cause of Jesus Christ may be served thereby.

Ed. G. Kaufman,
North Newton,
Kansas, 1953

PREFACE

It appears that the average level of intelligence of the American people during the past few decades has not risen in the same proportion as have our religious, social, economic, national and international problems. Our problems seem to have gotten beyond our intellectual reach. To live creatively intelligence must move ahead of problems.

It is encouraging however to know that there are many thoughtful people today who are earnestly seeking for something in the area of religious faith that they can believe and affirm with assurance, confidence and conviction. Neither the old orthodoxy or the new liberalism any longer satisfy. Thinking people are looking beyond and above "fundamentalism" and "modernism" for a religious faith that is set in the background of the Eternal.

The supreme revelation of such a faith has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ. This revelation is progressive, and it does not preclude further quest for truth, but instead, it invites and encourages adventures in things spiritual and eternal. For nearly a half century I have been encouraging my students to seek a faith that retreats to no place of isolation, but one which invites adventure and inquiry, and which knows no God but the God of truth, and no Christ but the Christ of God.

It is the hope in this course of lectures to present basic principles of the Christian faith in simple and uncompromising terms. To be so dogmatic as to leave no room for questions, or so vague as to offend no one will serve no good purpose. It is not intended to offer absolute solutions, but rather to stimulate sound reasoning (Isa. 1:18), interpretative insight (Eph. 3:4), and to inspire faith, hope and courage in Christian living.

March, 1953.
Goshen, Indiana.

THE AUTHOR

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LECTURE

I

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. *Foundations.* Some one once said: "Give me a place to stand and I will move the earth." Jesus once said: "Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Saint Paul once wrote: "Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." If the 700 million Church people in the world today would stand on this foundation they could move the world. The trouble is that many people fall for anything because they stand for nothing. Many people never know where they are going because they never started from any place. The Christian life stands on foundations that are eternal, but if faith in these "*foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*" (Psa. 11:3).

2. *Action and reaction.* It is an established fact that where there is action there is always reaction. Where good gets active evil also gets active. Where there is life there is also decay. In the physical world we have anabolism and katabolism—creative forces and destructive forces. The same principles hold in the moral and spiritual areas. When the katabolistic forces work faster than the anabolistic then our religion is in decay. If the Christian foundations are to be maintained then the creative forces must pro-

duce faster than the destructive. "*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*"

3. *New reasons.* Men always have good reasons for believing in old truth. Also in a changing world and with the accumulation of experience, there appear new reasons for old beliefs. Time and experience have given Christians of today reasons for belief that the early Christians did not have. In every generation the Christian faith has its enemies, and in every generation there appear new reasons for that faith. Always experience is the best evidence for our religious faith. It is not logic, nor is it argument, that establishes religious truth. It is experience. In this course of lectures we have to do essentially with the Christian experience.

I. CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS

To be sure, our knowledge of things temporal and eternal is limited and relative. Few things do we know fully and absolutely. We believe much more than we really know, and we do so rightly and intelligently. Nothing is so firmly believed at times as the things that we least know. This is true in the physical as well as in the spiritual area. When Job said: "*I know that my redeemer liveth,*" he spoke with reason and intelligence. When Paul said: "*I know in whom I have believed,*" he was speaking on the basis of reason and intelligence. The things that we know and believe constitute the foundations of our religion.

1. *Faith in God.* God is not simply another one of our religious beliefs. God is the belief. God is not just another doctrine. God is the essence of all Christian doctrine. When we seek the facts about God we

turn to *theology*. When we seek the meaning of God we turn to *philosophy*. When we seek the method of God we turn to *science*. They are all helpful.

Certainly, we have not seen God with our eyes, we have not touched Him with our hands, and we have not heard Him with our ears. But we have seen Him in His work. We have experienced Him in our lives, and we have heard Him in the still small voice of conscience. And best of all, we have seen Him, we have experienced Him, and we have heard Him in Jesus of Nazareth.

If we are to live creatively and successfully in such a world as this, and in such a life as this, we must come to terms with the universe and with the Creator of the universe. The man who has the universe against him has no chance. Through science we come to terms with the physical universe. Through faith in God we come to terms with the Eternal. The God who can hang out the sun in the sky by day, and the moon and the stars in the firmament by night; the God who can set the rainbow in the clouds after the storm can also give foundation to my life. Faith in God brings a man to terms with the Eternal and with the universe in which he lives.

2. *Faith in Christ*. Indeed, we have never seen Jesus of Nazareth in person. We can and have however visited many places in Palestine made sacred by his presence and his teaching. We have walked the fields and the byways that he walked. We see and experience the love and the mind of God personified in him. The love and the mind of God in Christian experience are even more real than was his physical body. Jesus Christ is a life, a truth, an ideal. He is "*The way*." This life, this truth, this ideal and this

way we may experience, and experience is our best evidence.

Jesus speaks in experience "*as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*" He speaks with authority on the meaning of life, the goal of life, and on the resources at our command in reaching that goal. Freedom, security and peace in the kingdom of God is the desired goal of every normal human soul. It is in the Christ that we have the resources in reaching that goal. Time and experience have made it clear that faith in the Christ is what the human soul needs. "*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*"

3. *Faith in the scriptures.* Lest we act thoughtlessly let us remember that the Bible is not a fetish with some magical powers. The Bible is not God. The Christian revelation is not in the letter. The Christian revelation is in Jesus Christ. (Heb. 1:1-3). The written scriptures are but the "record" of the revelation of God in Christ. (John 20:31. I John 5:10-11). The Bible is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, and that end is our spiritual enlightenment. Jesus himself is the revelation. The written pages bring us the record of the revelation in Christ, and we today have an added revelation in the record of human experience with the Christ.

Time and time again men have declared that they have finally destroyed the genuineness and the authority of the Christian scriptures, but just as often their claims have proven false. In some mysterious and miraculous way the scriptures keep coming back with evidence, power and persuasion. Something eternal in the human soul responds to the eternal truth in the message of the Bible. There is a response

in the human mind, the human affections, and the human will that knows no defeat. If our faith in this foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

4. *Faith in the Church.* Human personality is so constituted that it develops and matures best in association with other personalities. Men need each other. Men whet their minds by rubbing against the minds of others. Men develop their own affections by stimulating the affections of others. Men motivate their own wills by putting purpose into the wills of others. The Church is the one institution on earth where men may pool their minds, their hearts and their wills in one great purpose namely, the kingdom of God. The Church is the great work-shop of the Eternal on earth. The Church is the one institution in which the spirit of man finds fellowship and the opportunity for communal worship. There is power in unity, and in unity there is a reciprocity of personality. If this foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Always there are sincere souls who do not know just when they do believe. The answer is fairly simple. Men believe in God when they respond appropriately to God; when in mind, and heart and will they say "yes" to God. Men believe in Jesus Christ when they react appropriately; when they follow Him. Men believe in the scriptures when they acquaint themselves with the scriptures and practice their teachings. Men believe in the Church when they associate themselves with the Church and enter whole heartedly into the program of the Church. It is not so much what a man says that determines whether or not he believes. Rather it is what a man does and the way that he lives. By their fruit ye shall know them.

II. DESTRUCTIVE FORCES

The eternal foundations of God, Christ, the Christian scriptures and the Church can not be destroyed, but one's faith in them can be destroyed. Truth stands on eternity and nothing can destroy it. Faith in the truth can be destroyed and it is our faith in the truth that concerns us for the moment. Evil forces are at work in the foundations of our faith.

1. *Atheism.* Today the enemy of our faith in God is atheism. Atheism is no-God-ism. Whether a man says: "*There is no God,*" or whether he acts as though God did not exist, the end results are the same. Wars, three of which we have had in this generation, lead definitely to atheism. Faith in God and war can not travel the same road.

This American Republic was established by men who believed in God, and they had the courage to say so. The opening statement of the Mayflower Pact reads: "*In the name of God, amen.*" And a bit later appears the phrase: "*For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.*" Still later (1781), the Articles of Confederation began: "*Whereas we all came to these parts of America with one and the same end namely, to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy the liberties of the gospel in purity . . .*"

Also the First General Assembly of Virginia said: "*For as much as men's affairs do little prosper where God's service is neglected, all the burgesses took their places in the choir until prayer was said.*" And finally, the Declaration of Independence acknowledged the fact that men "are endowed by their Creator" with certain rights among them being life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

So long as our land recognized God and gave Him His proper place in the affairs of our land success and prosperity were the results. Today we have set up the United Nations Organization including more than fifty different countries without once recognizing God, evidently at the behest of the Moscow atheists. The *man-god* has been given the place that belongs to the *God-Man*. And then we express surprise at the helplessness of The United Nations. What hope is there when we attempt to meet atheism with atheism? *"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."* (Psa. 9:17).

2. *Humanism*. Perhaps the most polite enemy of our faith in Christ today is humanism. Humanism is not anti-God it is pro-man. Humanism does not consider deity necessary in the affairs of men. It does not deny deity. It only says that deity is not essential. Humanism simply places man in the center and moves Christ off to one side. Humanism believes that the essential value in religion is not deity, but humanity. Humanism says that so far as we know, man is the highest form of person in existence, and that if there is an object of religious devotion it can be only man himself.

In humanism religion is merely a technique, a shared conquest for the good life with emphasis on social justice and reform. It is the philosophy of service in a natural world according to the methods of reason and democracy. Humanism thinks that religion is on the wane since farmers have learned to substitute tractors and irrigation for prayers to a supernatural being. God is no longer needed. Science is more helpful than God, and man himself can ac-

comply more than Jesus Christ. Humanism is a termite that destroys faith in Christ.

3. *Biblical illiteracy.* The neglect of earnest study and our lack of knowledge of the Christian scriptures is destroying our faith in the scriptures. In times past men lost faith in the scriptures because of their critical approach to the scriptures. Today men are losing faith because they do not know the scriptures. It is just as true today as it was yesterday: "*My people are destroyed because they lack knowledge.*" (Hos. 4:6).

Ignorance has always been among the worst enemies of man. The average level of biblical knowledge today is very low. The Bible is still the best seller; it is found in more homes than any other book, and yet the people are woefully ignorant of its contents, and they are desperately inefficient in its interpretation.

There is in our Bible religious history, religious poetry, and religious philosophy that every one should know. There is no valid reason why this religious history, this poetry, and this philosophy should not be taught in regular courses in our schools, colleges and universities. The great principles of the Christian faith should be a part of every one's education. Ours is a Christian land in that Christianity is the prevailing religion, and every one should know the basic principles of the Christian faith. Biblical ignorance is a termite that is destroying our faith in the scriptures.

4. *Spiritual lukewarmness.* To be sure, about 50% of the people in the United States are members of the Church, and perhaps no more than about 50% of these are regular attendants at the Church service. Men do not seem to appreciate the fact that uniting with the

Church is only a first step; only a beginning, and that the Church is a place for communal worship and the culture of the spiritual life. Lukewarmness is starving the souls of many people.

A man does not need to take a critical attitude toward the Church in order to lose faith in the Church. He needs only to absent himself from the worship of the Church and do nothing. A boat can move down the stream and go over the falls without effort on the part of the boatman. He needs only do nothing.

In the early days of American life the Christian Church was placed in the center of the town or village. In fact, the Church was usually the first building set up and the homes and business houses were built around the Church. Our country grew strong and prosperous with God, Christ and the Church in the center.

Today, with great numbers of Church people, the Church is a secondary matter and not a primary concern. Spiritual and religious lukewarmness is a termite that is eating away the foundations of our faith in the Church. To an ancient Church that was spiritually lukewarm and indifferent the Lord said: "*So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*" (Rev. 3:16).

III. WHAT CAN WE DO?

War ignores the sacredness of human personality, and this means loss of respect for God and man. Men can not go into war and maintain proper respect for God and man, and this means atheism. Men can not set Christ aside, putting their trust in scientific gadgets and live the divine life. This means humanism. Thoughtlessness and neglect of the sacred scriptures

means spiritual illiteracy. Failure to appreciate the essential nature and program of the Church means spiritual lukewarmness. When our faith is thus threatened in God, in Christ, in the sacred scriptures and the Church, several things we can do.

1. *Acquaint ourselves with God.* When Eliphaz said to Job in his distress: "*Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace,*" (Job 22:21) he was giving good advice, even though Job at the time was better acquainted with God than was Eliphaz. The only cure for atheism is an experimental acquaintance with God. Our mistake these days obtains in the fact that most people do not take the time or make the effort to know God.

I believe in the reading of theology. I believe in the reading of philosophy, and I believe in the unlimited study of science, but never any of these as a substitute for personal acquaintance with God. The average man, the average layman, is neither a theologian, a philosopher or a scientist. He need not be in order to know God. Theology, philosophy and science all are helpful, but the primary approach to God is through faith and trust. Faith in God, trust in God, and love toward God and man is the way that we know God. This is the answer to atheism.

2. *Affiliate ourselves with Christ.* Affiliation with Christ does something in and for a man. Jesus Christ is the love, the will, and the purpose of God in action. A man comes to terms with God, with time and eternity in joining with Christ in his love, his will and his purpose. This is our answer to humanism. As eternity stands above time, so deity stands above the human. Time must be shot through and through with eternity, and humanity must be shot through and through with deity. In Jesus Christ eternity comes

into time. In Jesus Christ deity comes into humanity. To be affiliated with Christ means affiliation with God. This, I repeat, is our answer to humanism.

3. *Inform ourselves.* When Jesus said to his disciples: "*Go ye, therefore and teach all nations,*" he believed that men had learning capacity, and he expected them to develop that capacity. When the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "*Study to show thyself approved unto God,*" he believed that men could learn, and that they could learn only to the degree that they were willing to study. Men learn, men are informed, only when they study and think. Men are responsible, not only for what they know, but for what they might know. Men know the Christian scriptures only when they study those scriptures.

Our public schools, our colleges and universities can do nothing better in a time like this than to give a large place to the study of the sacred scriptures. The Bible is an anvil that has worn out many hammers, and it will stand up under the "sickle" of atheistic communism also. Our Christian colleges and our theological schools deserve our enthusiastic support. Young men entering the Christian ministry must be encouraged to make better, more extensive and more adequate preparation for the ministry. A serious study of the Christian scriptures, this is our answer to spiritual illiteracy.

4. *Continue the Jesus program.* In every successful institution four things are necessary namely, a philosophy, a program, a motive and a goal. The philosophy of Jesus is love toward God and man. The basic principle of his program is: "*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.*" The primary motive in the Jesus Program appears in his words: "*The Son of man is not come to*

destroy men's lives, but to save them." (Lk. 9:56). The goal of the Jesus program we have in his words: *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."* (John 10:28). To put it briefly, the Jesus philosophy is love toward God and man. The program is go teach. The motive is to save the lives of men, and the goal is eternal life.

Whenever the Church departs from this philosophy, this program, this motive and this goal it is moving off the foundations and the future holds no promise. We must continue the Jesus program. Jesus did not demand that we get results. He requires only that we *"go teach."* *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,"* (John 12:32), said Jesus. It is ours to carry on; it is his to get results.

Christianity is the one religion that people can not keep unless they give it away. Any religion, or any Church life, that does not make me want to do something for others can not do much for me. If we are to successfully meet the enemy of spiritual lethargy in the Church our lives must be geared to the Jesus program. This is our answer to the termite of lukewarmness that is gnawing away at the foundations of the Church.

CONCLUSION

The Christian way of life on the earth is not inevitable; it must be perpetuated by earnest believers; people who will give their lives for it. Foundation principles must be maintained. Destructive forces are always at work. Faith in God, faith in Jesus Christ, faith in the Christian scriptures, and faith in the Church are basic principles.

Our faith in God can be destroyed by atheism.

Our faith in Jesus Christ can be destroyed by humanism. Our faith in the Christian scriptures can be destroyed by biblical illiteracy, and our faith in the Church can be destroyed by spiritual lukewarmness and indifference. When this faith is threatened we must acquaint ourselves with God. We must affiliate ourselves with Jesus Christ. We must inform ourselves concerning the sacred scriptures, and we must continue the Jesus program. *"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"*

LECTURE

II

A REASONABLE RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

1. *Man and religion.* It is frequently and truthfully said that "man is incurably religious." Apart from religion man would scarcely be man. Faith and religion differentiate man from the mere animal. Religion and "person" belong together. There is something of each in the other. Imagination, some one has said, was given to man to compensate for what he is not, that humor was given to console him in what he is, and that religion was given to make a man what he ought to be.

In the history of mankind, as far back as we are able to go, even into pre-historic man, there is abundant evidence that man has always been religious, and that he has given expression to his religion in art and acts of worship. Our most primitive art is religious art. A man today may be irreligious, but he can not be non-religious. Men often deny at the top of their heads what they really are at the bottom of their hearts. A man may as well say that he is non-human as to say that he is non-religious.

2. *The meaning of religion.* Some one said: "If we could get religion like a Baptist, experience it like a Methodist, be positive about it like a Disciple, be proud of it like an Episcopalian, pay for it like a Presbyterian, propagate it like an Adventist, and enjoy it like a negro, that would be some religion." Indeed so.

Some one else has said that religious faith is an illusion, and that religion is but one of the techniques by which man seeks to realize that illusion. This statement can not be made to square with the facts. Certainly there is illusion in the religion of some people. There is also myth and superstition. But religious faith is something deeper than illusion, and religion is something more than a technique to bring that illusion to reality.

If an idea is a mere illusion how can it be brought to reality? Illusion and reality are mutually exclusive terms. If God is an illusion, then He is not real. If He is real then He is not an illusion. Illusion is not the answer to the meaning of religion.

Religion, the Christian religion, is a man's affirmative response to the call of God; the call of Ultimate Reality. When God rings the bell at the door of a man's mind the response is "yes." When God stands at the entrance of a man's heart the response is "yes," and when God knocks at the door of a man's will the answer is "yes." The Christian religion is a man's response to God in one's largest possible way. Religion is a persuasion. The Sermon on the Mount was not so much a statement of new ideas as it was an effort to persuade men to do what they already know. "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*" (Mt. 7:21).

3. *The meaning of faith.* "Faith," the scriptures tell us, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1). In more simple language we may say that faith is believing in results before those results arrive. Or as one of my seminary professors used to put it: faith is vision plus adventure.

Religious faith was gray with age before scientific knowledge first appeared. Faith implies trust in one's mental processes, and it plays a larger part in what a man believes than does reason.

Faith is the affirmation that some ultimate reality exists and is true before that ultimate reality becomes historically real. Faith is one's commitment to the highest that he knows or believes, even though that highest has not yet become a historic reality. The kingdom of God is an ideal which has certainly not yet become a historic reality. However, Christian faith makes that kingdom a present experience. Faith says: "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" (Lk. 17:21).

4. *The work of reason.* God paid a very great compliment to man when He said to the prophet Isaiah: "*Come now, and let us reason together.*" (Isa. 1:18). Just when is a man reasoning? Just what are the mental processes in reasoning? Reasoning is a process of inference; the process of passing from one proposition already known, or assumed to be true, to another truth distinct from, but naturally following it. In reasoning we infer one proposition from another. If A is true, we say, then B is also true.

Reason, like faith, is a technique by which we quest for truth. Reason does not originate truth. Faith apprehends truth, and then reason steps in to defend that truth. Reason is a servant of faith. Faith tells us more about God than does reason. Reason tests the rationality of our faith. Faith has its basis in the ideal, while reason rests its claims in the actual. Faith and reason always belong together. Faith puts courage into reason, and reason puts confidence into faith. In *science* we seek for causes. In *philosophy* we seek meanings, and in *religion* we seek personality.

Faith and reason are the servants of all three. *The essential interest of the moment is to see to it that our religion becomes reasonable, and that our reason becomes religious.*

I. OUR PERSONAL NEED

Life is a process in which there are needs and problems. Religion is the answer to a need. Religion is the solution to a problem. The problem is how to live the good life? The need is the resources for living that good life. If life is to be good; if it is to be the life that God meant, then we need three things.

1. *A faith to live by.* If faith is believing in results before those results arrive, then by far the greater part of a man's life is lived on faith. This is true in every area of human interest whether in the physical or the spiritual. It is in the area of faith that scientist and theologian meet. Apart from faith neither can make progress.

Faith registers in a man's life; it does something to him and for him. Faith in God gives the soul an anchorage both for time and eternity. Faith in Jesus Christ gives one an adequate ideal to follow, and faith in the Church gives one opportunity for spiritual fellowship. Faith in God means to act like God. Faith in Jesus Christ means to follow him and to grow in his likeness. Faith in the Church means giving oneself to the service and the support of the Church. We need such a faith to live by.

2. *A self to live with.* A man is more than simply mind. He is more than simply emotions, and he is more than volition. A man is himself, and with himself of necessity he must live. A man may isolate himself from others, but he can not isolate himself from him-

self. A man may escape into the desert, far from any human being, but he can not escape from himself. Men find it intolerable at times to live with themselves. Such men often make their escape from life in some unethical way. Such men have not cultivated a self with whom they can live.

Thousands of people find themselves intolerable. They can not get on and live with themselves. They are their own worst enemies. The source of their misery and intolerableness is within themselves. If men are to live creatively and successfully they must cultivate a self within themselves with whom they can live. God in a man's life, Christ in a man's life, gives a man a self to live with.

3. *A purpose to live for.* In such a world as this, and with human nature what it is, man needs not only something to live by, or something to live with, but something also to live for. To have everything to live by, as we have in this world, and nothing to live for would indeed be an irrational world. Existence without purpose is a blank. Life without purpose is empty, and emptiness is torment.

Indeed there is purpose in this world that a man may live for, and that purpose was indicated by the Great Teacher nearly 2,000 years ago. That purpose is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is the will of God in action on the earth. Such a purpose to live for gives stability and direction, concentration and consecration to a man's life. Nothing in all the world holds a man within proper bounds, or keeps him moving in the right direction as does an absorbing divine purpose. Every man needs such a purpose to live for.

So it is. We must have a faith to live *by*, a self to live *with*, and a purpose to live *for*. Our religion to be

reasonable, must give us that *faith*, that *self*, and that *purpose*. This is precisely what the Christian religion does.

II. A REASONABLE RELIGION

Human beings are "persons," and person implies intellect, emotion and volition—mind, heart and will. A religion to be reasonable must meet the needs of the whole person. It must inform the mind, inspire the heart, and motivate the will. This demands truth, love and purpose. To be reasonable our religion must be:

1. *Intellectually respectable*. To be intellectually respectable a belief must be true. Frequently one finds religion to be irrational and inefficient for the reason that it advocates and attempts to promote things that are not true. Some people can not distinguish between the miraculous and the ridiculous, or between marvel and magic. Untruth, regardless of the area in which it is advocated, is damaging to the best interests of man. The human mind has been constructed to detect and to appreciate the truth. The human mind has capacity to "think," and to "know." The human mind has capacity for intelligence. A religion to be reasonable must be intellectually respectable. In so far as respectability is concerned the Christian gospel has no equal. The Christian religion is intellectually respectable. It satisfies the mind at its highest efficiency.

2. *Emotionally sound*. A man is not only brains; he is also heart. A man is not only intellect; he is also emotion. A man grows and makes moral and spiritual progress, not alone on information, but also on inspiration. Information apart from inspiration gets a man nowhere. Conviction without feeling does little for a man. The words of the preacher without

emotion accomplish little. The mind must be properly informed, and the heart must be properly inspired. Emotions must be used and not abused.

A high state of emotions is no evidence of deep rooted religion. To be rational and reasonable a religion must be in proper emotional balance. Perhaps in no other area of human interest are feelings and emotions so frequently abused as in the area of religion. There is place for feeling and emotion in religion, and that place is right back of a great truth or a great conviction. The Christian gospel, the Christian religion, is emotionally sound, and it makes people emotionally sound.

3. *Volitionally dynamic.* A man is not only brains; not only heart; he is also will. In the good life there must be a "drive" as well as a "lead." The lead we have in the truth, and the drive we have in the will. "If any man will do his will," said Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17). Something happens to the mind when truth comes in. Something happens to the heart when love comes in, and something happens to the will when the divine purpose takes over.

Will and purpose are related. There is something of each in the other. This world is not big enough to stop the man with an absorbing purpose. "Thy will be done," in the Christian faith, is the great volitional dynamic. The kingdom of God is the will of God plus the will of man in action. In both lead and drive the Christian religion is not even in the same class with any other religion. The kingdom purpose puts stability in a man's will.

So we say, intellect, emotion and will must be kept in proper balance if religion is to be reasonable. It is

easy for the human mind to run away in critical intellectualism. It is easy for the human heart to run wild in destructive emotionalism, and it is easy for the human will to become stubborn or to drift aimlessly along. A reasonable religion will appropriate the mind to truth, the heart to love, and the will to purpose. This is the Christian religion.

III. BASIC PRINCIPLES

Religion, like a garment, is no better than the materials that go into it. Under heavy duty, under severe testing, some religions break down. In the vicissitudes of life, when everything seems to go wrong, or even in prosperity, the religion of some men gives way, and the men sink into the slough of moral and spiritual disgrace. Under the heat of temptation and discouraging circumstances their religion does not hold them. If a religion is to be reasonable and efficient in it there must be content.

1. *There must be conviction.* It does not require great effort to believe or to assent to religious truth. To give intellectual assent is one thing, but to have a conviction in that truth is quite another. If a man's religion is to be efficient the man must believe something in that religion for which he is willing to die as well as to live. A man's creed is what he believes, and when he believes it to the point where he is willing to live or to die for it, that is conviction.

Opinions have their place, but opinions are not convictions. Men hold opinions; convictions hold men. An opinion is a floating chip on the surface of the ocean. A conviction is a rock at the bottom to which the ship may anchor. Mere opinions are not strong enough to hold the human soul. The early Christians,

who died for their faith, were men of conviction. Jesus was a man of conviction. The Christian religion is a religion of conviction. A man without religious conviction is a traveler on the road that leads to nowhere.

2. *There must be conduct.* A man's creed, what he believes, eventually results in conduct. Too frequently one meets those who make great claims for their religious beliefs only to find that their conduct is anything but Christian. In the name of religion men have done the best things on earth, and in the name of religion they have done the worst. Religion can be the best thing in a man's life, and it can be the worst.

In a reasonable religion men are inspired to ethical and moral conduct. There is nothing in all the world in which a man can be so reasonable as he can in religion, and there is nothing in which he can be so unreasonable. Some men would be perfect gentlemen if it was not for their religion. In a reasonable religion men are inspired to service for others. A religion that does not make me want to do something for others certainly can not do anything good for me. The overt conduct of a man is a result of what he is on the inside. If the outward conduct of a man is to be right, ethical and moral, then the man must first be right, ethical and moral on the inside. Men do not "gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles." A reasonable religion results in reasonable conduct.

3. *There must be communion.* "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." (Psa. 42: 1-2). This is the voice of every normal human soul, a voice that our religion must answer. The human quests for the super-human. The finite quests for the Infinite. The human soul quests for the Uni-

versal Soul; for Ultimate Reality; for the Absolute; for God. The human seeks the fellowship and communion with the super-human. The soul of man seeks the consciousness of the Divine Presence, and it seeks fellowship with that Presence. This is religion in its most intense and vital form. This is the Christian religion.

The normal man wants the assurance that he is on speaking terms with the Eternal. Prayer, meditation and contemplation is the Christian way of communion with the Eternal. Prayer is not especially a matter of communicating something to God. Prayer is first of all a matter of communion with God. Rather than man telling God something, God is telling man something. God and man meet in the area of mind. The mind of God and the mind of man must meet. Meditation and contemplation is the way. This may be the mystic approach, but an effective approach none the less. A reasonable religion must afford spiritual fellowship and communion with God. Precisely in this the Christian religion has no equal.

IV. CHOOSING A RELIGION

Men are not born with "a religion." Men are born with a religious nature and with a mind to make choice of a religion. Men are not born Christians. Men are born with mental capacity to make choice of a religion. But if one is to choose wisely there must be a technique by which one may choose. In the Christian way there is an efficient technique.

1. *The mind must cast an intelligent vote.* Before my mind can cast an intelligent vote it must be informed. Before I make choice of any particular religion I should know the source of origin of that re-

ligion, what it will do for me in this present world, and what sort of man I will be when that religion has completed its work in me. I must be informed whether its origin is in some human or whether it is in God; whether in time or in eternity. I must be informed concerning its nature. Does it attempt to correct the man on the inside by first correcting the world on the outside, or does it propose to correct the world on the outside by first correcting the man on the inside? Is its destiny in time or in eternity? Things that begin in time usually end in time.

Of all things in the world in which a man should exercise intelligence religion is first. Religion is not a matter of time alone. It is also a matter of eternity. Few things, if any, enter the determination of human destiny as does our choice of a religious faith. We must know before we can make proper choice.

Certainly our knowledge concerning anything is incomplete; it is only relative. We do not know much about a cup of cold water. In fact we know very little about it, but we do know a great deal about what it can do for us when in need. We know very little about God, but we do know a great deal about what God can do for us in time of need.

We do not always know just where the whole truth lies. We do not always know the exact spot where the sun will come over the horizon. But as the darkness of night retires and the light of the morning approaches we certainly can know the general direction in which the sun is bound to come over the horizon. A bit more time, a bit more patience, and a bit experience and the sun of truth appears. Men are not perfect in knowledge. Men only move toward perfection. Notwithstanding the relativity of our knowledge the mind may

still cast an intelligent vote in the choice of a religious faith.

2. *The heart must cast a pure vote.* Of all the decisions that a man makes on earth the decision in the choice of a religious faith is most important and most far-reaching. While the mind is casting an intelligent vote the heart must be casting a pure vote. Man is not only brains; he is also heart. A man is not only intellect; he is also affections. In the choice of a religious faith a man must be sincere and desperately in earnest. He must be genuine and open-minded. He must be himself and not some other. Ulterior motives will not do. Hypocrisy will not do.

Certainly, we do not always know to our complete satisfaction, but we can be honest. We can be sincere, and we can be genuine. It is purity of heart rather than perfection in knowledge that brings men to God. "*Blessed are the pure in heart,*" said Jesus, "*for they shall see God.*"

In the choice of a religious faith the mind and the heart must cooperate. Decisions must be made to the satisfaction of the emotions as well as to the mind. The one must not be in revolt against the other. Intellect and love can be the best of friends. The mind and the heart must vote the same ticket, and then decide to get on together. This is the Christian way to make choice of a religious faith. This is the way to a reasonable religion.

3. *The will must cast the deciding vote.* In parliamentary procedure sometimes there is a tie vote, then the chair casts the deciding vote. In the choice of a religious faith sometimes it is possible that the mind and the heart do not fully agree. Sometimes the mind says "yes," and the heart says "no." And some-

times the heart says "yes," and the mind says "no." In such case the chairman, the will, must decide.

In the Seminary I once had a student who came up for his final examination before graduation. On reading his papers my mind said: "fail him," but my heart said: "pass him." My mind voted one way and my heart the other. So the chair, my will, had to cast the deciding vote. In the choice of a religious faith it is sometimes hard for the mind and the heart to agree, then the will must rule. The invitation to life is to "whosoever will." There is such thing as "the will to believe." When mind and heart are not in full agreement the will must take over and cast the deciding vote. In time it is usually the case that mind, heart and will do come to agreement.

CONCLUSION

So we may rightly conclude that life, religion, faith and reason belong together. There is something of each in the other. Our religion must be reasonable, and our reason must be religious. Man needs a faith to live by, a self to live with, and a purpose to live for. If our religion is to be reasonable it must be intellectually respectable, it must be emotionally sound, and it must be volitionally dynamic. In it there must be positive conviction, ethical conduct, and communion with the Eternal. In the choice of a religious faith the mind must cast an intelligent vote, the heart must cast a pure vote, and the will must cast the deciding vote. This, it seems to me, will give us a reasonable religion.

LECTURE III

THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION

1. *The master preacher.* Nearly 2,000 years ago a great preacher came into Galilee "*preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" (Mk. 1:15). Over these years the Christian Church has been preaching this gospel with more than human success. More than 700 million people on the earth today believe and advocate this gospel. A preacher with such a gospel deserves serious consideration. May it be that this preacher with his gospel has the cure for our present sick world? The author of this course of lectures believes without the slightest shadow of doubt that Jesus of Nazareth with his gospel does have the answer to the world's need. To persuade men of this fact is the duty and task of every minister of the gospel.

2. *The authority of the gospel.* Jesus "*Taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes,*" (Mt. 7:29). The authority of the Christian gospel is Jesus himself. The words that he spoke, and the work that he did represent that authority. His authority covers the goal of life, the method of reaching that goal, and the resources at man's disposal in making that goal.

The authority of the gospel is the authority of

truth, and Jesus is the truth. The authority of that truth finds further evidence in the response that it receives from the soul of man. The ultimate test of truth is not in logic, but in experience. What is the result when the gospel lays hold on a man's life? It seems that the nearer that one lives to that gospel the more like God he becomes, and the farther from it that he lives the more like a demon he becomes. By their fruit ye shall know them.

3. *The essence of the gospel.* Generally speaking we mean by the gospel Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Even so, the Christian gospel is not a book; not so many manuscripts. The Christian gospel is something more than a collection of ancient manuscripts called "The Four Gospels." The Christian gospel is the answer to the universal needs of the human soul. The Christian gospel is an experience before it is a book. The four gospels are but the record of that experience. The purpose of the written gospels was to awaken belief in Jesus and his message.

More than 100 years ago David Fredrick Strauss, a rationalistic German theologian, thought that he had completely destroyed the historical credibility of the four gospels. But scholarly criticism today most universally accepts the unique character and credibility of these gospels. These literary records speak to us today in such simple language and with such spiritual and moral power that it is hard for even the most simple minded to mistake or misunderstand.

I. THE GOSPEL RECORD

While the Christian gospel is essentially an inner experience of eternal life, nevertheless, the time came when it was necessary that the divine message be

placed in literary form. We must not confuse this form, this record, with the inner experience. The letter of the gospel is but the symbol of that inner experience. "*The letter killeth,*" says Paul, "*but the spirit giveth life.*" (II Cor. 3:6).

The gospel records did not appear in a day or in a year. These records grew up more or less spontaneously, and they passed through several stages.

1. *Oral tradition.* When Jesus came into Galilee "*preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,*" (Mk. 1:14), there was no written gospel. During the first twenty to thirty years after the death of Jesus Christians passed the word along through oral tradition concerning the sayings and the deeds of Jesus. These early disciples were the chief authorities on what Jesus did and taught. New converts to the gospel learned about Jesus from the words of those who had seen and heard him. All the sayings of Jesus that we have today in the written gospel are indirect, and not direct sayings of Jesus. Jesus spoke and others wrote.

2. *The synoptic gospels.* Time and changing conditions brought the need for written and authoritative narratives of the gospel. Among the first to attempt written narratives of the gospel was Luke. Says he: "*For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses. . . . It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.*" (Lk. 1:1-4).

With the writing of the synoptic gospels—Mark, Matthew, and Luke, authority passed naturally from

oral tradition to the written. Mark, writing to Roman Christians about 60 to 70 A. D., presents Jesus as a mighty conqueror, the Son of God exhibiting divine power, yet submitting to death on the cross. Matthew, writing to Jewish Christians about 70 to 80 A. D., presents Jesus as the Messiah who fulfilled the law and the prophets, and who, by his teaching and work, ushered in the kingdom of God which would eventually include men from all nations. Luke, the gentile, writing to gentile Christians about 80 to 90 A. D., presents Jesus as the good physician, the Son of man, and the Saviour of the world. These narratives were destined to become authoritative statements of the Christian gospel.

3. *The Fourth Gospel.* By the year 100 A. D. Jesus had become a person of history. A Christ merely of history can not save the world. It is the Christ of experience that saves. According to Eusebius there came a demand for a "spiritual gospel," a Christ for the present, and the gospel of John was the result. John, the philosopher, presents Jesus in terms of the Greek "Logos," the "Word."

"*The Word was made flesh,*" says John, "*and dwelt among us,*" (1:14), as the supreme revelation of God. John tries to show that the incarnation of Christ was the zenith of the manifestation of God which from the beginning of time God had been making throughout the world. It was the purpose of John to show that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that "*believing ye may have life in his name.*" (20:31).

4. *The canon.* The word "canon" signifies a collection of religious writings of an authoritative character such as "always, everywhere, and by all" have been considered divinely inspired, hence sacred and bind-

ing. The term was first used about 395 A. D. The test of canonicity was threefold: (1) External evidence, as the historic testimony of the Church. (2) Internal evidence from the book itself, determined essentially by Christian scholars themselves, and (3) The witness of the Spirit in the experience of believers. By these tests our written gospels were canonized.

In the early years of the second century certain eccentric teachers began to cause divisions among the Churches. In controversy with these "heretics" and sectarian teachers the more firmly established Christians called for books and letters in support of their beliefs; books and letter from the early disciples. Of these books and letters the four gospels and the letters of Paul were in the lead.

One Marcion (c. 140 A. D.), a heretical teacher, proposed a collection of Christian letters consisting only of Luke and ten letters of Paul. Marcion insisted that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of Jesus, and that the Old Testament should not be recognized.

During the 2nd. century, a few years before Marcion's proposal the Christian teachers of Asia had put forth the four gospels as the standard of faith and belief. But it was not until about 185 A. D. that we had anything like our New Testament circulating among the Churches. The Apostle's Creed, in the meantime, had for its purpose unity among believers. Then came the demand for a body of authoritative scriptures to further this unity among the Churches.

This demand gave rise to our New Testament. In this collection of writings were the four gospels and 13 letters of Paul. The list of New Testament books we know appeared first in the writings of Athanasius

about 367 A. D. Even then there was not 100% agreement on what books should or should not constitute the Christian scriptures.

Before the end of the 2nd. century however the four gospels were firmly established according to Irenaeus (130-202 A. D.) who quotes them freely. But the entire New Testament was not permanently fixed until about 500 A. D. Even so, after the religious reformation in Europe the Protestant Churches threw out a number of books that were in the Catholic Bible, and that are still in it.

II. THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

In the critical study of any idea, religion or institution, it is important to take into account the questions of origin, nature and destiny of such idea, religion or institution. If we can answer these questions we shall have made progress in the quest for truth.

1. *The origin.* Does the Christian gospel have its origin in the mind of some man, or in the mind of God? Does it have its origin in time, or eternity? Things that begin with man usually end with man. Things that begin in time usually end in time. For the origin of the Christian gospel we must look beyond man and beyond time.

1) *In the mind of God.* The Christian gospel has its origin not in the mind of any man, but in the mind of the eternal God; not in time but in eternity. All basic truth has its origin in eternity and not in time. In the mind of God there is no "beginning," and there is no "ending." "*I Am that I Am,*" saith God. (Exod. 3:14). "*For I am the Lord, I change not,*" said God to Malachi. (3:6). Jesus Christ is the Truth, and truth is eternal, and the gospel is the truth.

2) *In the purpose of God* God being eternal, without beginning or ending, His purpose must also be eternal and without beginning or ending. Things human change, but the purpose of the Eternal is fixed. The Christian gospel has its origin in that purpose. As the mind of God takes us into two eternities—one past and the other future, so also the purpose of God takes us into the same eternities. The Christian gospel is “a way” from somewhere to somewhere, and these somewheres are determined by the Eternal purpose.

3) *In the soul of man.* To be sure the Christian gospel has its origin in the mind and in the purpose of the Eternal. In a real sense it also has its origin in the human soul. Says Haggai: “*The desire of all nations shall come.*” (2:7). The Christian gospel is definitely related to that desire. It is the answer to, and the fulfillment of, that desire. In this sense the gospel has its origin in the human soul. In Jesus Christ eternity came into time and time entered eternity.

It is an interesting side line to note that when the Christian gospel first appeared in person in this world in the manger in Bethlehem town a father was there; a mother was there, and a little child was there, to witness and to welcome the arrival. Any gospel or any religion that enters the world in that way will never lose its appeal or its power. The Christian gospel is here to stay when received by father, mother and child.

2. *The nature.* Tradition, theology, doctrine and creed all have their place, but the Christian gospel is none of these. These are but the by-product of the Christian gospel. Before there was tradition, theology,

doctrine or creed there was the Christian gospel. The Christian gospel is more than all of these.

1) *It is an inner experience.* Men had experience with the sun, moon and stars before they had astronomy. Men had experience with rocks and hills before they had geology. Men had experience with plants and flowers before they had botany. Men had experience with God before they had theology. Men had an experience with Christ before they had a christology. Our Christian gospel grew out of that experience with God and with Christ. Our written gospel is an interpretation of that experience. It was written from faith and for faith, and for the instruction and the inspiration of the Churches.

2) *It is a promise.* The thing to which people cling above all things and the thing for which they will fight to the death, is life itself. Men want to know whether there is life beyond this life, or is the cemetery the end? The Christian gospel is a promise of eternal life here and now. It was this promise that gave appeal to the early Christians. "*And this is life eternal,*" said Jesus, "*that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*" (John 17:3). Jesus also promised: "*And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.*" (John 10:28). This promise met with great response in the human soul.

3) *It is a spiritual dynamic.* No religious or moral power has yet appeared among men comparable to that of the Christian gospel. Nothing among men has so affected the course of human history. That gospel has lifted empires off their hinges and sent despots into exile, and the end is not yet. The most dynamic thing in all the world is an idea; a con-

viction, and the Christian gospel is an idea, a conviction. A human body can be nailed to the cross and stopped but not the idea, the truth or the convictions which that body represented. Books, records and writings may be destroyed and confiscated, but the gospel is something more than books, records and writings. The Christian gospel is a spiritual dynamic, and when that dynamic invades a man's life it gives power to the man that knows no defeat.

4) *It is a moral corrective.* There are moral evils in man that need to be corrected and removed. From whatever source, or for whatever reason there is untruth and moral evil in the world. The Christian gospel corrects these evils in man by removing the cause. The center of all moral evil is in a wrong mind, a wrong heart, and a wrong will. It is precisely in these three areas that the Christian gospel operates. It removes untruth from the mind by the invasion of truth. It removes evil from the heart by the invasion of divine love, and it removes selfishness from the will by the invasion of the divine will and purpose. The Christian gospel is a moral corrective.

3. *The destiny.* Relative to destiny the question is: Just where is a man and what sort of man is he when the gospel has completed its work in him? Jesus said: "*I am the way.*" A way leads to somewhere. Just where is that somewhere? The Christian gospel has two destinies.

1) *In time.* Man lives in time between two eternities. The Christian gospel has a destiny in time, and that destiny is "twice born men," and twice born men are regenerated men. Twice born men are new men; men devoted to new loyalties. Such men have come to freedom through the truth. Christian freedom is

freedom *from* something; freedom *in* something, and freedom *for* something. It is freedom from sin and error; freedom in the truth, and freedom for service. The destiny of the Christian gospel is peace of mind, heart and soul, even in a world at war.

2) *In eternity.* It does not seem reasonable to believe that a good God would create a human mind with capacity for knowledge; a human heart with capacity for love, and a human will with capacity for an eternal purpose, and then cut them off before they had time and opportunity to mature. Time is too short and opportunities too limited for the maturity of personality. Personality has eternity in it. Knowledge in time we have only in part. Love never matures in time and our divine purposes are never fully realized on this side of the grave. The Christian gospel has its destiny in both time and in eternity.

III. THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL

The word "gospel" originates from a Greek word meaning "good tidings," or "good news." It means the glad tidings of salvation in Christ, the proclamation of the grace of God revealed and pledged in Christ. The content of the gospel is twofold.

1. *A divine revelation.* It is only natural to expect that the Creator would reveal Himself to his creatures. To get the Christian view of divine revelation we must take it from the highest point of observation, and that point is Jesus the Christ. In Christ we have the supreme revelation since Jesus is the mind, the love and the purpose of God in action. The gospel brings us the supreme revelation in three areas.

1) *The nature and purpose of God.* Since man is a "person" we must expect that God's revelation of Him-

self will be in terms of a person, and that person is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the nature and the purpose of God in action. Character and action belong together. The one interprets the other. In Mark, God is a great worker. In Matthew, He is the master teacher. In Luke, He is the healing physician, and in John, He is the loving redeemer. In character God is love, and in purpose He is life. A common mirror reveals an object without being that object. Jesus is both mirror and object. In Christ we see God as love, and His purpose in loving redemption of man. The supreme character of God, and the supreme purpose of God we have revealed in the supreme act, the incarnation, when *"The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."*

2) *The nature and destiny of man.* Jesus approached man as a person, and person can not be separated into mind, emotion and will, even though "person" is composed of all three. A person is all of these together. There is something of each in the other. It is the person who thinks. It is the person who feels, and it is the person who wills. A person is something more than mere thought, feeling and volition. A man can refuse to act against all three—mind, heart and will.

Jesus himself is the revelation of the nature, the value and the destiny of man. As to nature man is free. He is capable of choosing sin or righteousness. He has capacity to be saint or sinner. He has chosen to be both. Concerning value Jesus taught us that man is of more value than the whole world. (Mk. 8:36). Concerning destiny the incarnation reveals who man is and what he may become. Man is a sinner but he may become a son of God. In value man is more than

the entire world and in destiny he may enjoy eternal sonship.

3) *The nature and purpose of the world.* The term "world" in the gospel is used with three different meanings namely, the material world—the world of created things, (Acts 17:24), and the world of humanity, (John 3:16), where God so loved the world, and the world of unregenerated man, (I John 2:16), where the people of God are advised not to "love the world."

In the Hebrew view this world of things was created by God and was always under His control, and it was the present scene of the Divine purpose in the creation of a redeemed society. The Christian gospel takes over this view with certain modifications. In the New Testament Christ becomes central as the revealer and Lord of the kingdom for which the world came into being. Jesus becomes now the central figure in human history. In the Christian gospel this world is a means to an end, and that end is "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth.*" (Mt. 6:10).

2. *Good news.* Many people in the days of Jesus were living in despair and without hope. The days ahead promised little. The religions of the day gave little inspiration and practically no incentive to live. The Roman government was corrupt, the people were in economic slavery, and there was no hope. When Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, a kingdom of love, hope and grace, the people caught a new vision of life, took courage and entered upon a new hope. The good news was threefold.

1) *Concerning God.* From the God who said to Samuel: "*Thus saith the Lord of hosts. . . . Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both men and*

women, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass," (I Sam. 15:2-3), to the God who said: "*Suffer the children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,*" (Mt. 19:14), is a long, long way. From the God who laughs at sinners in distress (Psa. 37:13), to the God who wept with those in trouble (John 11:35), is a long way. From the God who spoke on Sinai to the God who suffered on Calvary is a long journey. The God of the Christian gospel is a God who acts always in forgiving and redeeming love. This is good news.

The gospel is not good news concerning Christ; Christ is the good news concerning God. God does not come to man to demand something; God comes to man to give something. God is not a God of revenge; He takes no delight in the destruction of the wicked or the slaying of the innocent. (Ezek. 33:11). It is good news to know that God is a God of love and compassion, and that He comes to share that love and compassion with men. "*God so loved the world . . .*" This is good news.

2) *Concerning man.* Even though man has misused his freedom and engaged in sin it is good news to know that he is not beyond the love of God or the loving redemption of God. It is good news to know that God comes to man, not for the purpose of revenge, but for the purpose of gracious forgiveness. It is good news to know that God comes to man, not to demand something of man, but to offer something to man. It is good news to know that God comes, not to demand that man produce something for Him, but that He comes having already produced something for man. It is good news to know that in faith and repentance man may accept the goodness of God, and through Jesus Christ, become a son of God. It is good news to

know that a man may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God *"unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* All of this is very good news.

3) *Concerning grace.* Christian grace is undeserved mercy. The good news of the gospel is the transfer from law to grace. According to Paul the law was a failure in so far as righteousness was concerned, because it demanded a righteousness which was beyond the ability of man to attain. *"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death."* So says Paul. (Rom. 7:9-10). However, according to Paul, the righteousness demanded by the law has been attained by Christ and credited to our account. God in Christ has satisfied His claim against us. The Christian virtues of righteousness, patience, humility, meekness and tolerance no man has fully attained. Perfection is not a "state"; it is a "process." That we are saved by grace and not by good works, this is good news. This is the Christian gospel.

CONCLUSION

The Christian gospel, like all truth, has its origin in God. The authority of the gospel is in Christ himself, since he is "The Truth" personified. The gospel records have their origin in history, and their canonization in the Church. These records have been made that men might believe in Christ, and that there might be unity in the Church. This gospel is essentially an inner experience, a promise, a spiritual dynamic, and a moral corrective. It is a divine revelation of God, man and the world. It is good news concerning God, man and grace.

LECTURE IV

THE CHRISTIAN MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION

1. *The innate desire.* The atom, composed of protons and electrons—positive and negative forces, is a complete universe in miniature. Man, a person, constituted of mind, emotion and volition, is a complete universe in miniature. The greatest and most significant universe that God ever created was a human person. Man is complete and he is incomplete. Man is independent and he is dependent. Man is a creature of “desire,” a desire that can be satisfied only as man joins the universe in God. The man with the universe against him is doomed.

When the prophet Haggai wrote: “*The desire of all nations shall come,*” (Hag. 2:7), he was making vocal that innate urge of the human soul. The idea of “freedom from want” is a false and a misleading idea. The normal human soul is always reaching out beyond itself to One who is above and beyond with whom it desires affiliation. “*My soul thirsteth for God,*” (Psa. 42:2), is a universal experience. Take want and desire out of human life and progress comes to a dead end.

2. *The great gulf.* Man as an independent creature is often tempted to take his own course, and to “go it alone.” Man forgets that independence is a product of dependence, and that obedience is the way to freedom. In the religious history of the Hebrew people it seems that a great gulf developed between man and God until

the idea of a mediator, a "select One," appeared; one to stand between God and man to intercede for man, and to interpret God to man and thus reunite them. In the book of Job, Job cries out: "*Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat! I would set my cause in order before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.*" (Job 23:3-5). Such a far away God calls for a mediator.

3. *Enter the Messiah.* The religious history of mankind reveals clearly that men have always believed that there was a select few, or an "elect one," who had special insight, unusual powers and super-human influence with deity; one who could relate man the incomplete with God who was the complete. This unusual person was the "Messiah," the "Anointed One," who could bring man and God together in freedom, security and peace.

Among the Hebrews God Himself was this Messiah, but He usually delegated the task to His representative who might be a king, or even one Cyrus, (Isa. 45:1), or some other unusual person at the head of a redemptive theocracy. It is entirely possible that the prophet Haggai had in mind some such person when he forecast that "*The desire of all nations shall come.*" It must be observed that in Haggai the Messiah is not limited to the Hebrew people. He is not limited by race, color, language or national boundary lines. In Haggai we have messianic universalism.

I. THE UNIVERSAL DESIRE

Underneath the skin of all men, whether white or black, yellow or brown, there is an essential likeness.

There is an area in human nature where all men meet. There are inner spiritual and moral aspirations, regardless of race or color, in which men represent essential likeness and identical needs. There is a three-fold desire running through men of all generations. This desire is innate, permanent and universal.

1. *The desire for freedom.* The origin of man is in God. The nature of man is freedom, and the destiny of man is immortality. Man comes into the world out of the past, he lives in the present, and he moves on into the future. Man is a "person," and person implies freedom, and freedom implies responsibility. Freedom, personality and responsibility belong together. There is something of each in the other.

Unscrupulous and unprincipled politicians promise their people security, and they do it at the price of freedom. When a people turn over to the government to do for them what they should do for themselves they surrender just so much of their freedom. A thousand times better and more honorable would it be to come to old age without security and have freedom than to come to old age with security and no freedom. A man who would sell his freedom for security is worthy of neither security or freedom.

Somewhere along the hazardous path of human history man fumbled and lost his inner freedom. Though by nature man is free, yet he finds himself a slave to sin and evil, false hopes, traditions and customs. The soul of man must have breathing room in the clear atmosphere of the Eternal. Spiritual and intellectual freedom is the natural and divinely ordained right of every man. The desire for such freedom is universal.

2. *The desire for security.* There is a security de-

sired by the human soul that is something deeper than freedom from physical and economic fears. Food, clothing and shelter have their rightful place. But the security desired by the human soul is something deeper and more eternal than the "cradle to the grave" philosophy. There is no such thing as security from the cradle to the grave, and if there was it would not be a good thing for man, but a definite evil. There is no such thing as security apart from personal responsibility. The good Lord never intended that security should come in any other way. The only man who has any moral right to economic security is the man who is willing to assume personal responsibility for that security.

There is a deeper and more essential security demanded by the human soul than economic security. There is a moral and spiritual security that obtains in the midst of economic, social, national and international insecurity. Such a security is the product of one giving himself to One whom he can trust and believe, and that One is God. "Trust and obey," whether in the scientist or in the humble worshipper, is the way to inner, spiritual security.

A man is secure in the physical universe only when and to the extent that he trusts and obeys natural law. A man is secure in the moral and spiritual world only when he trusts and obeys moral and spiritual law. No man can feel secure in the presence of another whom he can not believe and trust. The normal human soul desires One whom it can believe, trust and obey. This is a universal desire, the desire for security in the midst of insecurity.

3. *The desire for peace.* Peace of which I speak is an inner attitude, an inner state of mind, rather than

an outer social, national or international state. The fighting urge in man, as in the animal, is protective. There is nothing immoral about the urge to fight. The wrong obtains when this urge finds expression in hate and destruction rather than in love and construction. There is such a thing as St. Paul having "*fought a good fight.*" All good men fight good fights. They must. Good fights find expression in love rather than in hate.

There is such a thing as fighting for peace; peace of mind and soul. There is such thing as spiritual warfare, and all good men engage in it. All human beings by nature experience the desire and the urge for peace. It is a peace that obtains even in the midst of a world at war. "*Great peace have they that love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.*" (Psa. 119:165). Such a peace is the universal desire of all men. The prophet Haggai believed that this peace would come, and he had good reasons for so believing. The prophet was believing only in that which was the natural right of the soul.

Freedom, security and peace—these are the basic desires of the normal human soul. These are the universal desires of the peoples of all nations and of all generations. These are the desires that the anticipated Messiah would satisfy. Many messiahs have appeared, but only one has made good his claims.

II. THE MANY MESSIAHS

An endless number of would-be-messiahs have appeared in the world, voicing their claims to unique relationship with deity, and with capacity, power and authority to bring freedom, security and peace. Most of these Messiahs have gotten a hearing for the reason

that men in distress and desperation, like drowning men, will grab at straws. Any one who appears with exciting Messianic claims will get a hearing. The urge for freedom, security and peace is overwhelming at times, and the man who promises to give these often gets a hearing and a following. The pages of religious history record many disappointments and many blasted hopes as the result of the claims of the would-be-messiahs.

1. *The prophetic Messiah.* The zenith of prophetic Messianism appears in the prophet Isaiah. It was during the 8th. century B. C. that Hebrew Messianism rose to new and higher levels. The Mosaic statement: "*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken,*" (Deut. 18:16), may be Messianic. Some 1500 years later Philip said to Nathanael: "*We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth.*" (John 1:45). Doubtless the idea of a Messiah did occur to Moses, but the law took precedence in the mind of Moses, and rightly so. During the childhood period of the Hebrew people there was need of discipline. Does not St. Paul tell us that the law was only a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? (Gal. 3:24).

In the prophet Isaiah (Ch. 53) the Messiah, for the first time, appears as a "suffering servant." This was an entirely new idea. To be sure, the reference in Isaiah may be to a minority group of faithful Israel who were suffering vicariously in exile for the redemption of Israel. But whether the "suffering servant" was an individual to come centuries later, or a faithful remnant, the Messianic idea remains the same. Through this suffering servant redemption was to come

to Israel, and redemption would bring freedom, security and peace.

This "Ideal One," this "suffering servant" of Isaiah was to deal gently with the weak; he was to bear their sins and their iniquities. He was to suffer scorn and violence. He was to be "the man of sorrows," and he was to fulfill the desire of the human soul. The government shall be upon his shoulders, "*and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*" (Isa. 9:6). This is the zenith of prophetic Messianism.

2. *The Judaistic Messiah.* A few hundred years after Isaiah the prophetic Messiah was all but forgotten. In post-exile Judaism there was no "suffering" Messiah. Instead of the "suffering servant" God Himself would judge mankind. He would miraculously deliver Israel from oppression, He would punish the wicked and the heathen, and He would establish a regenerated Judah in a theocracy at the head of the whole world. In Judaism messiahship and suffering were mutually exclusive terms. It was the wicked who would suffer, not the Messiah.

In the book of Daniel the Messiah is the "*Son of man,*" and he is to appear "*with the clouds of heaven.*" (Dan. 7:13f). When he comes he will be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and all the people and all the nations shall serve him. His dominion will be an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and shall never be destroyed. This Messiah is to come from the transcendental heavenly world, and he shall inaugurate the everlasting reign of the saints.

In the book of Enoch the Messiah is "The Elect One," who shall sit on the throne of glory, and shall try

the works of the people, and he shall dwell among the people. "I shall transform the heaven, and make it an everlasting blessing; and I will come with mine Elect One," says God, "and dwell upon it but the sinner and the evil doer shall not set foot thereon . . . for the sinner there is judgment pending with me, so shall I destroy them from the face of the earth." (Enoch XLX-LVII).

With such Messianic idea it is easy to understand why the disciples said to Jesus: "*Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?*" (Lk. 9:54), to which Jesus replied: "*The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*" (Lk. 9:56). Also it is easy to understand why, "*He came to his own, and his own received him not.*" (John 1:11). The Judaistic and the Christian Messiah are mutually exclusive personalities.

3. *The philosophical Messiah.* The Messianic idea was not limited to the Hebrews. Whether Jew or Gentile the desire and the aspirations of the soul are the same, the desire for freedom, security and for peace. While the Greeks did not use the term "Messiah," or "suffering servant," they had in mind quite the same thing when they spoke of "knowledge." In Greek philosophy "knowledge" was to satisfy the desire of the human soul. Knowledge was the deliverer of the soul. Knowledge served the Messianic purpose since freedom, security and peace obtained somewhere in the area of the human mind.

According to Plato all intellectual life rests on trained insight, without which insight men fall victims of error, and error means slavery, insecurity and distress. Knowledge is the only guide to life. It is knowledge, according to Plato, that creates virtue in

the nature of man, and virtue brings freedom, security and peace.

Aristotle represents the same philosophy. Knowledge, and knowledge alone, brings freedom, security and peace to the mind and soul of man. Even so, Plato and Aristotle were not so far from Jesus who said: "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32). There are good reasons for believing that had Plato and Aristotle been living in the days of Jesus they would have been among his disciples.

4. *The scientific Messiah.* During the latter part of the 19th. century and the early part of the 20th. it was commonly believed that science might supply the demands of the human soul for freedom, security and peace. Science, through the mastery and the manipulation of the laws of nature, would conquer disease, eliminate want, satisfy hunger, destroy pestilence and war. The invention of the machine was to free men from the drudgery of work and bring leisure and happiness to the human race.

In the mastery and the manipulation of nature's laws science has done remarkably well, but as a Messiah in securing freedom, security and peace it has been a failure. To date science has only increased the threat to our freedom, our security and our peace. So far science has been only a "False Messiah." Man has been caught in the machine of his own making. Not many years ago the machine freed the peasant from his feudal lord. Today the peasant is becoming the slave of that machine. There never has been a time when our freedom was less free, our security less secure, and our peace less peaceful.

Freedom, security and peace are matters essentially

of mind and heart, far beyond the reach of science. Science can describe, but religion and philosophy must prescribe. Where science ends, the work of religion the philosophy begins and takes over. Our science must become religious, and our religion must become scientific.

5. *The political Messiah.* To be sure, I am aware of the fact that the people whom I am addressing at the moment do not depend on economic or political messiahs for their freedom, security and peace. But there are many peoples in the world today who do, only to be rewarded with disappointments, disillusionments, regrets and loss. Trusting in political messiahs men have only lost their freedom, their security, and their peace.

The State has often imposed itself upon the people as the custodian and preserver of freedom, security and peace, and it has just as often failed to deliver. The ancient Empires from the Egyptian to the Roman did it. In more recent years Italian Facism, German Nazism, Russian atheistic Communism, English Socialism and American New Dealism, all have proposed to give what belongs only to the Messiah of God to give. In every case these isms have set up the man-god in place of the God-man, Jesus the Christ. There is no freedom, no security and no peace in any of these isms; only slavery, disappointment, disillusionment and regret. "*Woe unto him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity.*" (Hab. 2:12). The political Messiah always has been, and always will be a failure.

III. THE CHRISTIAN MESSIAH

1. *Jesus of Nazareth.* In his baptism experience Jesus received confirmation that he was the Messiah.

"And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mk. 1:11). Following this confirmation Jesus was tested by the evil one on how he would proceed as the Messiah, whether political, apocalyptic, or as the "suffering servant" of Isaiah. He decided in favor of the "suffering servant." Then he returned to his home community in Nazareth where he delivered his first sermon from Isaiah 61:1-3. In this sermon he declared himself the suffering Messiah, and in it he started up the road which ended on Calvary.

2. *The Jesus approach.* The false messiahs usually make their approach through social, economic and political means. They propose to bring freedom, security and peace by attacking men from the outside. The false messiahs propose to correct men on the inside by first correcting the world on the outside. The true Messiah would correct the world on the outside by first correcting men on the inside. The false messiah would put a new suit on the old man, while the true Messiah would put a new man in the old suit. The Christian Messiah would put a new mind, a new heart and a new will in the old man, and in this way bless the old world.

3. *Explanation or experience.* There is no scientific explanation of how the Christian Messiah satisfies the soul for freedom, security and peace. There is no theological explanation. It is not the chemical analysis of water that saves the thirsty man in the desert; it is drinking the water that does the work. It is not the philosophical or theological explanation of the Messiah that meets the desire of the human soul. It is an experience with the Messiah. It is the experience

of a regenerated mind and heart and will that does the work.

The apostle Paul suggests an explanation which certainly does not fully explain. "*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" (Rom. 5:9-10). *Justification through his blood; reconciliation through his death, and salvation through his life*, this is the Pauline explanation.

Sometimes man's explanations explain less than does the thing we attempt to explain. In any case it is not our ability to explain the Messiah that brings freedom, security and peace; it is our willingness to experience him in faith and trust.

4. *The way of the Messiah.* Something seems to have gone wrong in the area of human thinking. Something has gone wrong in human affections, and something has gone wrong in the area of human purpose. Our freedom, our security, and our peace must be sought in these three areas. If there is to be freedom there must be truth. If there is to be security there must be love, and if there is to be peace there must be purpose. It is precisely in these areas that the Christian Messiah operates.

1) *The restoration of the mind.* "Ye shall know the truth," said Jesus, "*and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32). A man is free only when his mind is free, and the mind is free only when it is motivated by the truth. Men are not always what they think they are, but they certainly are what they think. Wrong thinking means wrong conduct. Right thinking means right conduct. Error in the human mind

means mental frustration, and the frustrated mind is not free. Error and untruth mean mental and intellectual slavery.

If there is to be freedom there must be a restoration of the mind that God meant. John Bunyan in the Bedford jail enjoyed greater freedom than did the men who put him there. The Christian Messiah puts a new mind in the old head, rather than a new head on the old mind. No mind can be free that is entangled with error, untruth, superstition and petrified traditions. It is the truth, the restoration of the mind to truth, that brings freedom. This is the work of our Messiah.

2) *The restoration of heart.* "*The heart is deceitful above all things,*" says an ancient man of God, "*and desperately wicked.*" (Jer. 17:8). The heart is the symbol of the inner mental, spiritual and moral essence of the man. Sin, jealousy and hatred in the human heart make security impossible. Where there is fear there is no security, and where there is no security there is always fear. Fear and security are mutually exclusive conditions. Security is the product of confidence and trust, and confidence and trust are the fruit of love. "*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment.*" (I John 4:18).

The fear that leads to insecurity, and the insecurity that leads to fear are moral and fatal diseases that have their breeding places in the human heart. There is no security in fear, and there is no fear in security. It is fear that takes men and nations into war. It is fear that builds armies, navies, air forces and atom bombs. The nations have never had better and more powerful weapons of defense than they have today, nor have we

ever had a greater sense of fear and insecurity than we have today. These things just do not bring security. Fear brings armaments, and armaments bring fear, and fear and armaments bring war. This is a vicious circle that must be broken, and the love of God in the heart of man is the only power than can break it. Only by the corrective power of Divine love can the human heart be restored to the heart that God meant. It is in such restoration of the human heart that we may have security. This restoration is the work of the Christian Messiah.

3. *The restoration of will.* The mind and the heart decides on a purpose, but the will must execute that purpose. Purpose alone, with no will to enforce that purpose, gets one nowhere. The will must follow up on the work of the mind and the heart. If the mind and the heart are right, then the will in following the mind and heart will also be right. A major part of our world troubles today originate in the area of our world purpose. Our world purpose is wrong because the world mind and heart are wrong. Only in a restored mind and heart can we have a restored will, and only in a restored will can we have a right world purpose. If there is to be peace in the soul, peace among the nations, there must first be a "will to peace," and the will to peace means a federation of the human with the Divine will.

The Christian Messiah pointed the way to peace when he prayed: "*Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" (Matt. 26:39). Such a petition means a federation of the human with the Divine will, and such a federation means peace. "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,*" declares the Christian Messiah. (John 14:27). Peace of mind, and heart and soul

is the product of the federation of the human and the Divine wills. Such a federation means the restoration of the human will to the will that God meant. This is the work of the Christian Messiah.

CONCLUSION

The nature of man is freedom, security and peace, and this freedom, this security and this peace obtain only as man remains in normal relations with God and the universe. Sin and moral evil have put man and God far apart. A great gulf has come between, and it is this gulf that has called for a Messiah whose work it is to establish right relations between man and God.

The prophetic Messiah was a "suffering Messiah." The Judaistic, the philosophical, the scientific and the political messiahs have proven miserable failures. The Christian Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, brings freedom, security and peace in the restoration of man to God through the restoration of the human mind the restoration of the human heart, and the restoration of the human will. In this restoration we have "The desire of all nations" fulfilled.

LECTURE V

HAS JESUS THE ANSWER

INTRODUCTION

1. *A great claim.* Nearly 2,000 years ago Jesus of Nazareth made a sweeping claim. Said he: "*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6). What right, and upon what authority can any man make such a claim? And what assurance have we that such a way is adequate for today? To make such a claim one needs to be the best man who ever lived. If he is not the best man who ever lived, then he is the worst man who ever lived for making any such claim. The interest of this moment is to know whether Jesus is "the way," and whether he has the answer to this sinful, confused and chaotic world, or whether we shall look for another. It is frequently said that Jesus was good and efficient for his day, but by this time he is out of date and belongs to antiquity. Let us see.

2. *Who is man.* Man is a "person," and a person is a combination of mind, heart and will—intellect, emotion and volition. Whether Jesus is adequate for today, whether he has the answer for such a world as this, depends entirely on the needs of the human mind, the human heart, and the human will.

1) *The mind.* The human mind is a "knowing" mind. A knowing mind implies consciousness, and consciousness implies capacity for recognition. The

normal mind can recognize thought as its own thought; memory as its own memory, and an act of the will as its own act. The normal mind can know that it knows. "I think," said Descarte, "therefore I am." A knowing mind without corresponding truth would not be reasonable. Certainly, there is such a thing as truth, and the human mind has the capacity to know and to manipulate that truth. The human mind is a morally responsible mind. It is responsible for what it thinks and believes.

2) *The heart.* The heart is the symbol of inner emotion and aspirations. The human heart is a "loving" heart. The human heart has capacity to love. Love knows no definition. Love knows only experience. Love was an experience before it was a doctrine or a theory. Love is a relationship between God and man, and between man and man. That relationship has everything to do with making a good or a bad world. The neglect to properly develop the capacity of the human heart, like the neglect of the human mind, can lead to a very bad world.

3) *The will.* The will is the "self" in action. The human will is a "purposing" will. The will can execute its own purpose. The human will is a responsible will. "*If any man will to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.*" (John 7:17). The human will is a "willing" will, and it is responsible for what it wills. A man can be a man of good will, or he can be a man of ill will. Good will among men means a good world. Ill will among men means a bad world.

So we say that a "person" can know, can love, and can will. A "person" has intellectual capacity, emotional capacity, and volitional capacity. One of the great evidences of God in His world is "motion." In

a person knowledge means that the mind is moving. Love means that the heart is moving, and purpose means that the will is moving. The mind, the heart and the will of man can not exist without movement. The mind moves in the area of truth. The heart moves in the area of love, and the will moves in the area of purpose. When any one claims to be "The way" he must be able to meet the human mind with truth, the human heart with love, and the human will with purpose. Can Jesus qualify? We shall see.

I. THE THREE CHRISTS

In *fact* there is but one Christ, but in *time* there are three. There is but one Christ, but that Christ may be observed under three aspects of time. Each Christ is essential and it is important that we give due consideration to each. Any one should not be emphasized to the neglect of the others.

1. *The Christ who was.* There is the Christ of history; the Christ in whom two worlds clashed nearly 2,000 years ago—the pagan against the Christian. This Christ who was, this Christ of history, was born in Bethlehem; came with his parents—Joseph and Mary, to Nazareth; grew up in a carpenter shop; was baptized by John the Baptist at the age of 30; was tempted 40 days in the wilderness to surrender his divinely ordained purpose; preached his first sermon in Nazareth from the book of Isaiah; introduced himself as the coming Messiah; was rejected by his people; thrown out of the synagogue and out of the town; came to Capernaum to continue his sacred ministry; later came to Jerusalem and cleansed the temple; was falsely and maliciously accused; instituted a memorial supper; fought a victorious battle in Gethsemane; was con-

demned and crucified; rose from the dead on the third day; met and commissioned his disciples to preach the everlasting gospel of the kingdom to all the world. This is the Jesus of history, the Christ who was.

2. *The Christ who is.* The first century Christians had fallen into the rut of looking merely at the Christ as one who has been; a fact in history. The synoptic gospels do present the Christ as an historic person; one who was. Then about 100 A. D., according to Eusebius, there came a demand for a "spiritual gospel"; a Christ who now is. The gospel of John was the result of that demand. The Christ of the fourth gospel is the Christ of experience; the Christ who is; the Christ who now dwells in the human heart, convicts men of sin, and makes them restless and ill content with themselves and with everything that is at variance with Christ himself. This is the Christ who today stands at the door of every heart seeking admission. This is the Christ of faith; the Christ of experience; the Christ who leads men to love God and their neighbor; to love their enemies. This is the Christ who inspires men to sacrifice and to suffer in the cause of The Eternal. This is the Christ who now is; the Christ of present experience.

3. *The Christ who is to be.* Saint John, while on the Isle of Patmos, wrote: "*Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come.*" (Rev. 1:4). John recognizes the Christ who was; the Christ who is, and the Christ who is to be. Then he proceeds to present the Christ who is to be. "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*" (1:8). This is the Christ of the great tomorrow. This is the Christ before

whom all nations shall be gathered, and before whom every knee shall bow. This is the Christ yet to be.

Certainly, our Christian faith includes all three of these Christs—the Christ who was, the Christ who is, and the Christ who is to be. The error on the part of some obtains in the fact that they spend all their time and energy in the critical examination of the historical records, as well as the historicity, of the Christ who once was, and neglect the Christ who now is. To these seekers after truth Christ is a “has been.” This is unfortunate.

Then there are those who see only the Christ who is to be; the Christ of the apocalypse; the one to be revealed somewhere in the future. This is equally unfortunate. These people spend their time speculating on what they call the “second coming” of Christ, overlooking too frequently their duties in connection with his first coming. This, too, is unfortunate. Personally, I find that doing the present will of God permits me no time to speculate about His future plans; plans known only to God Himself.

Our present concern is to strike a proper balance in our thinking between the Christ who was, the Christ who now is, and the Christ who is to be. Our particular concern of the moment is the Christ who now is. To honor the Christ who now is, it seems to me, is definitely wiser and infinitely more essential, than to speculate about the Christ who is to be. The future of this world is in good hands, the hands of God, and we can trust Him. What we need is to concern ourselves with the Christ who now is.

II. *OUR WORLD TODAY*

Wherein the world was wrong in the days of Jesus it is wrong today. Indeed, scientifically, industrially,

nationally and internationally the world is different. But in so far as basic human nature is concerned, in so far as morals and ethics are concerned, the world today is the same world as that of 2,000 years ago. The wrong in the world in every generation has been in the minds, the hearts, and the wills of men. The world today is wrong:

1. *In Mind.* The wrong in the world today, as always, is due to the fact that men believe things that are not true. The great enemy of the human mind has always been error and untruth. Men sin because they believe things that are not true. Men go to war because they believe things that are not true. Men gravitate to low moral levels because they believe things that are not true. The temptation to sin and wrongdoing always proposes for true that which is not true. Temptation promises rewards which it never delivers. The violation of moral law promises great rewards, but it never delivers those rewards. Sin, corruption, war, graft and immorality promise great things but never make good their promises. The wrong in the world always begins in the minds of men in their believing things that are not true. War is the most successful liar on earth, always has been.

2. *In heart.* Today, just as 3,000 years ago, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" (Jer. 17:9). The heart is the symbol of a man's deepest thoughts, feelings and emotions. That heart is capable of divine love, and of demonic hate. The heart is the symbol of the essence of the person. The person may be motivated by love; it may be motivated by satanic hate. Malice, jealousy and revenge may dwell in the human heart as definitely as love, tolerance and non-violent resistance. The world heart

today is full of hate, revenge and intolerance. With our lips we speak good. In our hearts we think evil.

Russia says: "We want only peace." The United States says: "We want only peace." Then why can we not have peace? Because Russia says "peace" and thinks war, and is preparing for it. Because the United States says "peace" and thinks war, and is preparing for it. We have war when we prepare for war. We have peace when we prepare for peace. With our lips we speak peace. In our hearts we think war. I repeat, war is the most successful liar on earth, and I add, that if we would end war as a means of international adjustment we must treat it as sin and not as a matter of diplomacy, glory or heroism.

3. *In will.* The will is the man himself in action. When a man goes into action in his own and exclusive interests we call it selfishness, and selfishness is the very essence of sin. Self-will set up against the Supreme Will is the supreme sin. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness was in the request of the evil one to act in his own selfish interests, independent of the good of humanity. All sin can be traced to selfishness in some form or other. To be selfish is the common temptation of all men. Capitalism lends itself easily to the temptation of selfishness. Labor unions lend themselves easily to selfishness. Politicians lend themselves gloriously to the temptation of selfishness. It was true 2,000 years ago; it is true today.

III. OUR WORLD NEEDS

The world today stands in need of the same things that it did when Jesus of Nazareth walked the paths of Palestine and spoke to men in the Sermon on the

Mount. Human nature has not changed; perhaps need not be changed. Human nature can be changed in its course and in its expression. But in essence human nature is the same as it has always been. It is purpose that gives direction to human nature. The world today, as always needs:

1. *An interpretation of life and a purpose in life that will place universal human well being at the center of every interest.* Life must have meaning, and life must have purpose if we are to have a good world. Men must learn that their own best interests obtain only to the degree that they serve the best interests of others. This is the Christian interpretation of life, and this is the Christian purpose in life. Now if such an interpretation of life is to prevail, and if such a purpose is to possess men, then three things must take place:—

1) *The correction of our minds.* The human mind lends itself easily to error and untruth. A radio message can go around the world seven times in a second. Sometimes it takes years to get the same message through a quarter of an inch of human skull. Said Jesus: "*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" Untruth, believing things that are not true lead only to mental slavery. It is the truth that brings mental freedom. Saint Paul had to meet the same problem. Said he to his people: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" (Phil. 2:5). Both Jesus and Paul had their problems with human minds that were thinking and believing things that were not true. Today we must find some way to correct the human mind. We must find a way to stop speaking good and thinking evil. We must stop talking peace and thinking war. It is what a man thinks,

rather than what he says, that ultimately finds expression in his conduct. If we want good conduct we must first have good thinking. We cannot live up while thinking down.

2) *The purification of our hearts.* To change the minds of men alone will not correct this world. The heart must also be changed. Military force will never do it. And we can not make a good world by shifting bad men to new positions. It is the pure in heart that see God. Right meanings and noble purposes never grow out of an evil heart. Selfishness, hatred, jealousy, malice and revenge never inspire true meanings or noble purposes. It is the clean heart that gives meaning and purpose to life. Today men's hearts everywhere need purification, and that purification demands a power above and beyond human power. It is "*out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh.*" (Matt. 12:34). If that heart is to speak right things it must be purified. Clean water never comes through filthy pipe lines. Bad morals begin in the heart. The mud hen never flies with the eagle. The world needs a purification of the human heart.

3) *The motivation of our wills.* The drive that moves a brick is on the outside of the brick. The drive that moves a man is on the inside of the man. That drive may be good, or it may be vicious. Wrong motives result in wrong conduct. The leading motive in the world today seems to be selfishness; a selfishness, all too frequently, under the cloak of a false righteousness. Nations are guilty of aggression under the cloak of bringing freedom to oppressed peoples. Politicians are guilty of insincere promises under the cloak of pure motives, and of offering prayers for the

purpose of securing votes. We must find a way of motivating the human will with pure motives, and this is a superhuman task. Only an adequate purpose can do it. There is such a purpose as we shall note presently.

IV. WHAT HAS JESUS TO OFFER

John the Baptist was in prison. Things looked discouraging to him. Doubtless he had thought a great deal about the claims of Jesus. So he sent two of his disciples to Jesus, asking: "*Art thou he that shall come, or do we look for another?*" (Mt. 11:3). Thinking people always have questions. To this day some people are still asking: "Does Jesus have the answer? Is Jesus adequate for such a world as this? Does Jesus have a way that will reach the inner essence of personality, and correct man on the inside?" This is the question of the moment.

The test of any way of life is the degree of satisfaction that it brings to moral consciousness. Whether or not Jesus is "The way" depends on what he has to offer for the correction of the human mind, the purification of the human heart, and the motivation of the human will. Does Jesus have something to offer that will satisfy the intellectual, the emotional and the volitional needs of men? Time and experience prove that he does have something to offer; that he does have "The way." Jesus has three things to offer.

1. *A gospel of truth.* Mind implies truth, and truth implies mind. There is something of each in the other. The mind that is dominated by error and untruth is in an abnormal state, and moves in the wrong direction. The mind of the world is in that abnormal state, and it is moving in the wrong direction. Minds

that move toward sin, hatred, jealousy, malice and war are moving in the wrong direction, and they need correction. Jesus Christ has a gospel of truth to offer that will correct the mind that is moving in the wrong direction. "*Ye shall know the truth,*" said he, "*and the truth shall make you free.*" This is the gospel that corrects the human mind, and sets it moving in the right direction. The only way to remove error from the human mind is to bring in the truth. Jesus himself is the personification of truth, and it is this truth that the minds of men need.

2. *A religion of love.* Rule by religion is older than rule by law, and rule by law is older than rule by love. Moses was before Jesus. Sinai was before Calvary. The religion offered by Jesus is a religion animated by love. Love is a movement of the heart, a response to the Eternal. Love purifies the heart. It is the pure in heart who see God. Hate, jealousy, revenge and intolerance can not exist in a heart moved by divine life.

"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.*" This is the religion that Jesus has to offer. This love (agape) is what we mean by a man's response to Ultimate Reality. That Ultimate Reality is God, and that God is love, and that love purifies the heart of man. That love restores normal relations between man and God, and between man and man. This is what the world needs. Jesus has the answer.

3. *A kingdom purpose.* A will without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder. A man without a purpose is adrift in the sea of life, tossed hither and thither with every wind. Such men *fall* for anything

because they *stand* for nothing. The great work of the world is done by men of purpose. A world without purpose is a world that leads nowhere. Men can not be driven to unite and to cooperate. Law can not force people to unite. People can unite only as they enter cooperatively into a great purpose.

Jesus has a purpose to offer that is big enough to demand the united efforts of all men, regardless of race or color. Jesus offers the kingdom of God, a purpose, a task, that will correct the wills of men and supply them with a purpose not only for time, but for eternity. When the kingdom purpose lays hold on a man no crown of thorns, no condemnation, and not even Calvary can stop him. This is the kind of purpose that men everywhere need. This is the kind of purpose that will motivate the wills of men. This is the purpose that Jesus has to offer.

CONCLUSION

Certainly, I am persuaded that Jesus has the answer to a world that is wrong in mind, in heart, and in will. The Christ who was, the Christ who is, and who is to be has the answer. Men everywhere must get a new interpretation of life and a new purpose in life that will put universal human well being at the center of every interest. Schools, industry, capital and Churches must be made to function in the interests of universal redemption. This will demand a correction of our mind, our hearts and our wills.

In this correction Jesus has something to offer. He has a gospel of truth to correct the mind. He has a religion of love to correct the heart, and he has a kingdom purpose to correct the will. Truth will give us a sane mind. Love will give us a pure heart, and the

kingdom of God will give us a motivated will. If Jesus of Nazareth had never appeared on the earth as he did the human imagination in all probability would have created such a person in response to the needs of the human soul. Certainly Jesus has the answer.

LECTURE VI

THY KINGDOM COME

INTRODUCTION

1. *The prayer.* To the earnest student of the New Testament it at once becomes evident that the main current of thought moves along the idea of the kingdom of God. The idea is primary in the sayings of Jesus. To understand and to interpret the New Testament, as well as to interpret and understand the Christian way of life, it is essential that we understand and appreciate the message and the import of the kingdom of God as represented in the teachings of Jesus. Perhaps there is no better place to begin with than with the prayer suggested by Jesus to his disciples.

In that prayer we have an epitome of the nature and the content of the kingdom of God. There is the request: "*Thy kingdom come.*" What is that kingdom? Answer: "*Thy will be done.*" Where is that will to be done? Answer: "*On earth.*" To what extent? Answer: "*As it is in heaven.*" When is that will to be done? The answer evidently is, now. The purpose of the moment is to interpret that prayer with its leading implications.

2. *The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God.* Evidently in the mind of Jesus the two terms were synonymous. The attempt to differentiate between the two terms leads only to confusion. It is Matthew who uses the term "*kingdom of heaven,*" while the other gospel writers generally use the term "*kingdom*

of God." Matthew uses the term "*kingdom of heaven*" about thirty-three times, and the "*kingdom of God*" some five times. It is only natural for Matthew to do this. Matthew being more strictly Jewish, follows more closely the Jewish tradition in not using the name "God" unless necessary. It was good Jewish orthodoxy not to use the name "God" when some other word could be used in its place. So Matthew uses the word "heaven" when he means God. Jesus no doubt used both terms.

3. *The kingdom and the Church.* In the four gospels the terms "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" appear about 112 times, while the term, "Church" appears only twice, and in both cases in Matthew. Evidently Jesus did not consider the kingdom and the Church as identical. The kingdom seems to be the mansion while the Church is the vestibule. In his frequent use of the kingdom it would seem that the kingdom was primary in the mind of Jesus, and the Church secondary. It was not until Jesus was rejected by the Jews, not until "his own received him not," that he said: "*Upon this rock I will build my Church.*"

It is evident that the kingdom of God is an inner spiritual experience while the Church is the body of believers in Christ through which that spiritual experience finds expression. One day the Church will have completed its mission, and the kingdom of God will take over forever. "*Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.*" (Psa. 145:13).

I. POPULAR VIEWS

In Rabbinical literature there are many references to the "Malkuth Shamain," or "kingdom of heaven."

It was a kingdom in which "*The Lord shall be king over the whole earth.*" (Zech. 14:9). In Jewish tradition this kingdom will be a reality only when all the heathen religions have failed and the whole world is united in the worship of Jehovah.

In his first sermon in Nazareth Jesus chose for his text words from the prophet Isaiah: "*The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. . . .*" (Lk. 4:19-21). Then he commented: "*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*"

By this time the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him, and they that heard him were filled with indignation, and they rose up and threw him out of the city with intent to kill. The indignation of the people was due evidently to the fact that Jesus did not advocate the traditional views of the kingdom. Jesus dared to differ with the religious authorities of his day. It is the easiest thing in the world for a young man to secure for himself a crown of thorns and a crucifixion. He need only have a few ideas and convictions of his own, and then have the courage to voice them.

1. *The national hope.* Speaking for God, the prophet Nathan said to David: "*When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee. . . . And I will establish his kingdom. . . . I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*" (II Sam. 7:12f).

To this hope of a political and national kingdom

many of the Jews held to the day of Jesus. The kingdom of God (Malkuth Shamain) was purely political and national. The center would be in Jerusalem and a descendent of David would be on the throne. Even to this day the orthodox Jew prays at the wailing wall in Jerusalem that God would re-establish His people in Palestine and restore again the throne of David. When Jesus preached his sermon in Nazareth he had a goodly number of people in his audience who held to this view.

2. *The apocalyptic hope.* But centuries passed and time failed to bring in the national kingdom and many people gave up hope for such a kingdom and turned to the apocalyptic hope, a kingdom to be directly revealed from heaven. The Messiah, an agent of God, would come suddenly riding on the clouds of heaven, and he would set up his kingdom in some miraculous and catastrophic way. The ancient worthies who had passed out of this life over the centuries past would return to earth. There would be a resurrection of the dead, a great judgment day of the Lord, the wicked would be destroyed and the heavenly Jerusalem would be set up on the earth. (Baruch 4:2f).

The Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Greeks used stone, marble and bronze as a means of expressing their ideas of deity, and their hopes of the future. But the Hebrews, loyal to their Mosaic law: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," painted apocalyptic word pictures instead, such as the book of Daniel and Revelation. Evidently the authors of these word pictures meant to indicate the character of God, the destruction of the wicked, and the final victory of the righteous.

When Jesus preached his sermon in Nazareth he

had in his audience many who held to the apocalyptic view of the kingdom. Both the national and the apocalyptic views of the kingdom have extended down over the centuries to this present day in the form of pre and post-millenniumism. In our churches today we have both the national and the apocalyptic types of mind concerning the kingdom of God.

3. *The redemptive hope.* The first task that Jesus faced was to separate the true Messianic kingdom from the Jewish view of the kingdom. The task remains to this day. Jesus presented a kingdom view in harmony with the nature and the character of God and His purpose in man. In that day, as today, there were choice spirits of interpretative insight who could see farther than the national or apocalyptic hopes.

Evidently Jesus had in his audience those who understood the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53, and who held accordingly to the redemptive hope. Even earlier, in the childhood of Jesus, there was Anna, the prophetess, who continued in the temple serving God with fastings and prayers. When she saw the child Jesus she gave thanks to God, "*and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*" (Lk. 2:38).

Also "*there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation (Messiah) of Israel.*" (Lk. 2:25). There was also Joseph of Arimathaea who "*waited for the kingdom of God.*" (Mk. 15:43). While it seems evident that Jesus had in his audience both those who held to the national and the apocalyptic hopes, he also had those who held neither, but held to the redemptive hope. We shall see how Jesus meets the situation.

II. JESUS ENCOUNTERS TEMPTATION

To be called to a task in which you know before you begin that you will be a disappointment to your people is a hard experience. To fail gloriously in meeting the expectations of your people is an achievement, though distressing. Some men in some institutions must do just that. Jesus found it necessary to do the same.

Following his baptism Jesus withdrew from the masses to think things over. For 40 days he gave thought to his Messianic mission and how he would proceed. Jesus was human as well as divine, and his temptations came to him on the human level, temptations no different from those that come to any good leader. It was the temptation to give the people what they *want* rather than what they *need*.

The temptation of Jesus was the temptation to yield to the Messianic hopes of the Jewish people; to be the national or the apocalyptical Messiah. It was the temptation to take the easy road; to be popular with the people and receive their praise. The only alternative was to be true to his Messianic mission, be unpopular with the religious leaders, receive their criticism, their condemnation, and to suffer death as a martyr. The temptation was three-fold. (Matt. 4:1-11).

1. *Stones to bread.* In the Jewish tradition the Messiah would be a political Messiah and he would lead his people against their enemies, overthrow the Romans and establish his kingdom in Jerusalem. He would convert stones into bread, feed his army miraculously and bring complete victory to Israel. So the evil one said to Jesus: "*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*" This was a major item in the program of the national

hope of the kingdom. This was the type of program that many of the Jews anticipated.

But to this temptation, to this program, Jesus made reply: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" Jesus stood by his convictions. He rejected the temptation. He refused to yield or to become the political messiah and the establishment of a political kingdom. Later on in his ministry he again confirmed his stand: "*My kingdom,*" said he, "*is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.*" (John 18:35). In this encounter with Satan in the wilderness Jesus won the first battle.

2. *On the pinnacle of the temple.* But Satan, as always, was persistent. He tried again to persuade Jesus from his divinely appointed course. He took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and said: "*If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" (Mt. 4:6).

In this quotation from the book of Psalms (91:11-12) Satan, like some men today, showed himself a master in misquotation. The original promise was on condition namely, "*to keep thee in all thy ways,*" implying certainly that "*thy ways*" are the ways of God. Satan omits this provision entirely. Angels do not protect men in wrong ways. Satan was tempting Jesus to accept a wrong way.

The apocalyptic hope of the Jews anticipated startling things of the Messiah, such as appearing suddenly from heaven, riding on the clouds, and execut-

ing sudden judgment and immediate destruction of the wicked. The Messiah would appear suddenly at his temple and miraculously establish his kingdom. "*The Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.*" (Mal. 3:1). Whatever Malachi may have had in mind, the Jews had in mind an apocalyptic coming of the Messiah.

In his reply to this temptation Jesus was prompt and decisive. Said he: "*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*" What Jesus in this temptation did was to refuse to lend encouragement to the Jewish apocalyptic hope of the kingdom. He refused to become the apocalyptic Messiah of Jewish expectation. So he won the second battle with Satan.

3. *The kingdoms of the world.* There was one thing however that both the national and the apocalyptic hopes agreed upon namely, that when the Messiah did come he would dominate the entire world. But in neither case was he the "suffering Messiah," but a conquering and a ruling Messiah who would cause his enemies to suffer. The national and the apocalyptic Messiah would be a world ruler, and he would rule with a rod of iron. He would break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. (Psa. 2:9). On such a Messiah both the nationalists and the apocalyptics agreed.

Accordingly Satan took Jesus into a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and promised Jesus that he shall have them all if he will only fall down and worship him. This was a temptation to please everybody by compromise. But Jesus refused to compromise with wrong. He definitely rejects the possibility of winning the whole world by compromise, and he says to

Satan: "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*"

Following his three complete victories over the evil one Jesus proceeded to preach and to establish his Messianic kingdom as a suffering Messiah by way of the cross. This is why when "*He came to his own, his own received him not.*" (John 1:11). Jesus was a disappointment to the Jews. But to be true to his mission he could not do otherwise than reject both the national and the apocalyptic hopes of his people, and to proceed with the redemptive hope as a "suffering servant."

In this course Jesus separated the true idea of the kingdom from the traditional, and indicated the deeper meaning of that kingdom. This deeper meaning was the product of something that the Jews did not have namely, his knowledge of God, his experience with God, and the purpose of God in the world. His idea of the kingdom was not limited alone to the Jewish people but included all mankind.

III. THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

When the Pharisees demanded of Jesus to know when the kingdom of God would come he answered them by saying: "*The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! For behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*" (Lk. 17:20-21). And to Pilate Jesus also said: "*My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.*" (John 18:36).

From these utterances, along with many others, it is clear that the kingdom of God was none of the things that the Jews expected. The kingdom of God,

in the mind of Jesus, represented a high spiritual order which lay back of the world and gives it meaning. It is the fulfillment of the will of God among men, a kingdom inwardly experienced in a fellowship with God here and now. In view of the sayings of Jesus we may make several reasonable deductions concerning the nature of the kingdom.

1. *It is an inner experience.* "The kingdom of God is within you," said Jesus. The kingdom of God is a high spiritual and moral order which implies the perfect fulfillment of the will of God which, under earthly conditions, can be only partially fulfilled. This inner experience of fellowship with God is what the gospel of John calls "eternal life." It seems that in the mind of Jesus the kingdom of God and eternal life are synonymous terms.

Many people indeed can not think in the abstract; they must have something concrete; something objective. The danger in such thinking is that these people will get their eyes on the object, on the symbol, and overlook the spiritual essence. Jesus evidently spoke in both concrete and abstract terms. He said that the kingdom of God was like a man who sowed good seed in his field or like a mustard seed or leaven or a treasure hid in a field, or like a net cast into the sea. These are but concrete, symbolic expressions of an inner experience of mind, heart and will. It is the experience of an inner process, not merely an inner state, and that experience is fellowship with God or eternal life.

2. *The will of God in man.* "Thy will be done," is the key to the nature of the kingdom of God. Evidently the will of God and the kingdom of God are alike in nature. "If this cup may not pass away from

me, except I drink it, thy will be done." (Mt. 26:42). When the will of man becomes affiliated with the will of God, we have the kingdom of God on earth.

The mind of man was made for the mind of God. The will of man was made for the will of God. In mind and will man may choose to rebel against God and take his own course in the world. In mind and will man may disassociate himself from God. This means disassociation from the kingdom of God. But where man accepts the will of God as his will, and permits the will of God to act through him, there we have the kingdom of God. In nature the kingdom of God is something like the will of God.

3. *The love of God in action.* When the scribe asked of Jesus which was the first commandment of all Jesus replied: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. . . . And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" (Mk. 12:28f). To this the scribe gave wholehearted consent, to which Jesus replied: "*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*"

So we may rightly conclude that divine love and the kingdom of God are very closely related. The man who loves God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself is standing very close to the kingdom. In fact, he is in the kingdom, or perhaps better, the kingdom is within him. Where the love of God gets into action in a man's life there the kingdom of God is in action. To such a man the kingdom of God has already come.

4. *The redemptive purpose of God.* Everything in the universe from the astronomical to the microscopic points in the direction of purpose; a purpose that

is something more than human. This universe, material and human, is *for* something. It is for God and man. The kingdom of God represents the fulfillment of that purpose, particularly in the area of the human. That purpose has its origin and destiny above and beyond man. In this purpose the kingdom of God is both means and end in the redemption of man.

Between God and man there must be cooperation if the redemptive purpose is to be effective. "*For we are laborers together with God,*" says Paul. (I Cor. 3:9). The power of God is infinite, yet man with his finite power can defeat the purpose of God in his life. A man can say "no" to God and defeat the purpose of God in his own redemption. To join with God in His redemptive purpose means the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God and divine redemption are quite synonymous. There is something of each in the other.

IV. AREAS OF OPERATION

Many of the Jewish people had come to believe that the world had run its course in sin and evil, and that there was no possibility of making it any better. The world was in the hands of the evil one, and there is no other way, many people thought, than for God to take a hand Himself and by some miraculous and catastrophic act destroy the old world and bring in a new. But this was not the Jesus program. Said Jesus: "*The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*" (Lk. 9:56). Physical or military force was entirely out of the picture. Jesus used only the force of love, knowledge and truth, and these operate in three areas.

1. *In the individual.* Men in Jesus' day thought to correct the world through the application of physical

and military force to the outside of men. Jesus proposed to correct the world through the application of the force of love to the inside of men. In recent years there has been a tendency on the part of some to think that Jesus was a social reformer, and that his concern was not for a kingdom of inner experience so much as it was for a perfect society somewhere in the future.

No doubt Jesus did entertain a vision of some such perfect society for the future, but before such a society could become a historic reality the spirit and the ideals of the kingdom of God had first to become the inner experience of individual men. If love, mercy and justice are to characterize a future society, then love, mercy and justice must first characterize the lives of individual men here and now.

The purely social gospel would begin with the world and move toward the individual. It would begin with the universal and move toward the particular. Jesus would begin with the individual and move toward the world. He would begin with the particular and move toward the universal. Jesus began his program by correcting a few individuals and then sending them out to minister the love message to all the world. New men means a new world. To be sure, communism offers to put a new suit on the old man. Jesus offers to put a new man in the old suit.

2. *In society.* The kingdom of God is not essentially a reform movement. Jesus made no direct effort to reform society. However, it would certainly be a misrepresentation of the thought of Jesus to say that he was not interested in social welfare. "*The kingdom of heaven,*" said Jesus, "*is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till*

the whole was leavened." (Mt. 13:33). Certainly Jesus was interested in a good society, and he set about to create that society through the regeneration of individual men. "*The kingdom of God is within you,*" said Jesus. (Mk. 17:21). It is only to the extent that the kingdom of God is within the individual that we have it in society.

Ministers of the gospel mistake when they preach only the individual gospel as against the social, or the social as against the individual. The two belong together. There is much of each in the other. It is a bit like driving through a tunnel on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. No matter which end you enter, if you keep moving, you are bound to come out at the other. If we begin preaching the kingdom of God with the individual we are bound ultimately to come out in society. If we begin with society we are bound to come out with the individual. The kingdom of God operates in both areas.

3. *In the world.* "*The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*" (Psa. 24:1). By right of creation God has an interest in every part of the world. The same Christ who said: "*Come unto me,*" also said: "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.*" This same Christ also said: "*For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*" (John 3:17). Men who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness can not rest until that kingdom and that righteousness is the possession of the whole world.

The program of the kingdom of heaven begins in the inner experience of the individual and completes itself in the life of the whole world. The gospel of the

kingdom begins at Jerusalem, goes into Judea, then to Samaria, and on to the utmost parts of the earth. (Acts 1:8). No man motivated by the inner experience of the kingdom of God can rest at ease until that inner spirit becomes the inner spirit of all men. The gospel of the kingdom is the one gospel that men can not keep for themselves unless they are actively engaged in giving it away.

CONCLUSION

Briefly stated then, the kingdom of heaven is an eternal kingdom. It has its past, its present and its future reality. Jesus put aside the popular Jewish hopes of his day. The national and the apocalyptic ideas had no appeal for him. Jesus advocated and promoted the redemptive hope in which the "Suffering Servant" played the leading role.

In the teachings of Jesus the kingdom of God was an inner spiritual experience. It was the will of God operating through the will of man. It was the love of God in action, and it was the redemptive purpose of God coming to fulfillment in man. This kingdom has its present as well as its future reality, and it operates first in the individual, then in society, and finally in the whole world.

LECTURE VII

WE ENTER THE KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION

1. *The Jesus entrance.* The words of Jesus concerning the entrance to the kingdom of God were clear and unequivocal. Said he: "*Except ye be converted, and become as little children ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Mt. 18:3). The Greek term used for "converted" means a complete turning around and moving in the opposite direction.

The disciples were anxious about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus made it clear to them that the matter of who was to be greatest was the matter of least concern. The real concern was: who shall enter the kingdom at all, and how? To illustrate his way of entrance Jesus set a small child in their midst and proceeded to indicate that the spirit of humility, the spirit of faith, and the spirit of trust was the way into the kingdom of God. Without this spirit it is not possible for one to enter.

2. *The problem.* The most difficult person in the world to teach is the one who thinks he knows but does not. Jesus had to face a people who were sure that they knew, but Jesus was sure that they did not know. *Jesus faced the problem of disentangling the true idea of the kingdom from the traditional Jewish ideas.* For Jesus the kingdom was neither national or apocalyptical of the traditional type. It was not to come as a

political movement or as an apocalyptic miracle. The kingdom would not come "with observation." (Lk. 17:20).

But the kingdom was to be a present experience here and now, and men can enter here and now. No doubt Jesus did on occasion use the traditional terms when speaking of the kingdom, but he did so with new meaning and significance. Jesus certainly did inherit much from tradition, yet he was not governed by that tradition. Jesus warned the scribes and the Pharisees: "*Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*" (Mt. 15:6).

3. *The kingdom treasure.* Said Jesus on one occasion: "*The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*" (Mt. 13:44). According to Jesus a man can well afford to exchange anything that he has in this world in order to possess the kingdom of God. "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mk. 8:36).

The treasure in the field indicates value. The value of anything can be measured only in terms of results. The results of seeking the kingdom is the attainment of that kingdom, and the attainment of that kingdom results in eternal life. The attainment of the Kingdom of God is the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God, the end for which this world exists.

I. THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

Immediately following the confession of Peter: "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" Jesus replied: "*Upon this rock I will build my Church,*

and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Mt. 16:18-19).

On the basis of these words the Roman Catholic Church teaches that to Peter was given some unusual authority which was not given to any of the other disciples; that he was the supreme ruler of the Church, and that there is an unbroken succession of authority from Peter to the pope of Rome to this day. The Roman Church teaches that the Church and the kingdom of God are identical, and that "the guarantee for the indestructible oneness and sameness of the Church is St. Peter," because to him and to his successor Christ gave the promise. (Peiper—What Catholics Believe—p. 101).

The keys given to Peter, say the Catholics, were handed down to his successor the pope who is now the bishop at Rome. None of the powers of the pope are derived from any one but God, and he is responsible to no human being. He has the power to make laws for the Church. He can inflict censures, remit or retain the sins of the individual, and he can grant dispensations from any vow or obligation, and he is the infallible teacher and law-giver because he is guided by the Holy Ghost. (Sullivan—The Visible Church—p. 2). Against all of this ecclesiastical autocracy the Protestant Church rebelled. There is a better interpretation of the "keys."

1. *A symbolic expression.* In the days of Jesus when the young Scribe was dedicated to his office he was given a key as a symbol of his privilege and duty to open the treasury of divine oracles. The expression

of Jesus concerning the keys and the handing over of the keys was nothing new in that day, and it was thoroughly understood by the people. It was only natural after Peter had voiced the key truth concerning the Christ that Jesus should employ a familiar expression in his reply to Peter. The authority to "bind" was not the authority to bind men in their sin or in their vows; nor was it the authority to "loose" men from their sin and their vows at the behest of some over-head human authority.

The keys are the key message, the key truth, and Peter had that truth, and Jesus expected him to preach it. Figuratively speaking, Peter was a scribe in the new kingdom, as is any teacher or preacher of divine truth. There is no evidence whatsoever that Peter was given any authority not granted to any other disciple. In fact, it was James, and not Peter, who was the bishop at Jerusalem. (Acts 15).

2. *Not keys to the Church.* Where the Roman Church went astray on the "keys" was in her assumption that the kingdom of God and the Church were one and the same thing. The natural error into which to fall, since the kingdom and the Church were the same thing, was to assume that the keys were the keys to the Church. This is evidently what the Roman Catholic Church did. We need to keep in mind that the kingdom of God is the *end*, while the Church is the *means*. Means and ends must not be confused. Men come into the kingdom of God by an act of God, not by some arbitrary act of man.

To advocate that the keys spoken of in connection with the confession of Peter are keys to the Church is certainly a misrepresentation of the key symbol. While the kingdom of God is an end, and the Church

the means, so also are the keys a means to the entrance to the kingdom. Men enter the kingdom of God through the key truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The keys are in the possession of every faithful minister and teacher of the Christian gospel. For any man to assume that he holds authority in the keys above any other servant of God is not the mark of humility but of arrogance.

3. *Not over-head authority.* The Christian Church does have authority in a given area, and men in the Church may have delegated authority. No man has ever been given divine authority as the "head of the Church." Jesus Christ is the head of the Church. (Eph. 5:23). The authority in any man in the Church is merely delegated authority, and not absolute authority. Jesus Christ, the Truth, is absolute authority.

On the matter of authority Jesus once spoke. Said he: "*Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and that they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever shall be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*" (Mt. 20:25-26).

The authority of a Christian minister is the authority of a humble servant, and not that of an over-lord. The servant has the keys, the truth, and it is his duty and privilege to use those keys. None of the apostles ever assumed that Peter had any more authority than they themselves. Authority is a dangerous thing, except in the hands of a humble man, and humble men are rare. The man-god is always seeking place above the God-Man.

4. *A significant thing.* It is significant to note that

Peter never laid claim to any authority that the other apostles did not have. Matthew is the only gospel writer who mentions the key instance and the words of Jesus to Peter. If Mark, as is supposed, was the private secretary to Peter, then is it a simple matter to suppose that Peter being somewhat more modest and humble after the day of pentecost, did not mention the saying of Jesus concerning the keys in the presence of Mark.

In fact there is not a single reference on record where Peter ever quoted the saying of Jesus concerning the keys. This may be good evidence that the saying was commonplace and thoroughly understood by the common people of the day. The saying was symbolic. If the keys had meant superior authority Peter would have given utterance to the effect, and the rest of the apostles would have recognized Peter in that authority. Even Saint Paul never recognized Peter as having any unusual authority. In fact Paul exercised authority over Peter on one occasion. (See Gal. 2:11).

5. *Peter uses the keys.* While Peter was granted no divine authority above any of the other apostles, he was however, granted the privilege of using the keys to the kingdom of God on two special occasions. There is no particular significance in the fact that Peter was given this privilege. Some one needed to preach the truth that Christ was the Son of the living God, and conditions simply favored Peter on these two occasions. Peter was always a bit more outspoken and ready to speak than were the other disciples, and he did use the keys to the door of the kingdom of God on two significant occasions.

1) *On the day of Pentecost.* When the day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples were together

at one place. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews out of "every nation under heaven." Then Peter stood up with the other eleven and preached to his audience the first Christian sermon and using the key truth concerning Jesus Christ. Said Peter: "*Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and harken to my words. . . . Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, him . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death. . . . Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" (Acts 2:1f). Following this key message some 3,000 people, mostly Jews, believed, repented and came into the kingdom of God. The door to the kingdom of God was now wide open for the Jews, and the keys are still in the door and in the hands of no over-head ecclesiastical authority.

2) *At Caesarea with Cornelius.* Cornelius was a gentile, but a man of religious convictions. Said Peter to Cornelius: "*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all): That word . . . was published throughout all Judaea . . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power . . . and we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem: whom they slew and hanged on a tree; him God raised up the third day.*" (Acts 10).

Hearing this key message concerning the Christ

Cornelius believed and was baptised and received into the kingdom of God as the first gentile to be officially so received. It was Peter who had the honor of preaching the key truth to the gentile world, just as it was his honor to preach the first Christian sermon to the Jewish world. Perhaps Pentecost and Caesarea are more significant than the Roman doctrine concerning the keys, apostolic succession and the Pope. Peter used the keys, opened the door, left the keys in the door, and he gave them exclusively to no other man.

II. WHEN DO WE ENTER

1. *Do we enter at all?* It is still an interesting question: Do men enter the kingdom of God, or does the kingdom of God enter men? Is God in the world, or is the world in God? Is God in man, or is man in God? Is Jesus Christ in man, or is man in Jesus Christ? On one occasion Jesus said: "*For behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*" (Lk. 17:20). On another occasion he said: "*Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matt. 18:3).

Doubtless Jesus used both approaches to the kingdom. Men do enter the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God does enter men. The way that men pass out of the earthly sphere into the heavenly is a two-way avenue. God comes into man, and man comes into God. Jesus comes into man, and man comes into Jesus. In either case it is a matter of Divine-human cooperation. God and man both share in the experience.

2. *Is it a future experience?* We may be certain that the kingdom of God in the mind of Jesus was the fulfillment of a Divine purpose which implied time.

This means that men enter the kingdom not alone as an "event," but rather as a "process." Jesus saw a new age in the future. He did speak of the kingdom as something to be achieved and attained in the future. "*Thy kingdom come,*" certainly implies the future. However, as to the time of its fulfillment, one of these speculative questions, Jesus never discussed. The thing that matters most with Jesus is the supreme fact that the kingdom of God is coming and that God would establish it in His own time: When we pray: "*Thy kingdom come,*" we are simply entering into God's plan and purpose with Him. The kingdom is something yet to come as a historic reality.

3. *Is it a present experience?* Since faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," then by faith the kingdom of God becomes a present reality, and a present experience. Just as definitely as Jesus spoke of the kingdom as future, he also spoke of it as present. When Jesus came preaching in Galilee he said: "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" (Mk. 1:15). In this case the kingdom of God is a present experience. And certainly if "the kingdom of God is within you" it must be a present reality. Jesus evidently shared with the Jews their future hope concerning the kingdom, but he did not share that hope to the extent that the kingdom had no present reality in experience. For Jesus the kingdom of God was a present reality as well as a future hope.

III. HOW DO WE ENTER

The phrase, "to enter the kingdom" appears frequently in the four gospels. According to Jewish tra-

dition there would come an end to the present age when there would be a great judgment and all the wicked and the unworthy would be cast aside, while the righteous and the worthy would enter into the kingdom of God.

But Jesus thought and taught otherwise. Since the kingdom is not only future but also present, men may enter here and now. The one thing needful for entrance, according to Jesus, was the surrender of one's self to the will and the purpose of God. In the teachings of Jesus this surrender to the will of God means that we enter the kingdom:

1. *Through faith.* Ultimate Reality always lies far beyond our knowledge. Faith is always active beyond our knowledge. Faith is a way of seeing within believing. The normal mind always believes more than it actually knows. Science may tell us more about the world than does revelation, but faith tells us more about God than does reason. It is the spiritual appropriation of the Word of God namely, Jesus Christ, that brings a man into the kingdom of God. It is through faith that a man's entire nature is brought into normal relationship with God and the truth. The eye of faith looks forward to an Ultimate One namely, God, and the new life in the kingdom is the union of that faith with that Ultimate One. When Jesus spoke those words to his disciples: "Have faith in God;" and when he spoke to the woman: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," he was indicating the way into the kingdom of God.

2. *Through repentance.* In his first public discourse Jesus emphasized the necessity of repentance on the part of man. Said he: "The kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye." Psychologically, repentance

means a complete change of mind. It means a new mind in the likeness of the mind of Christ. Theologically speaking, repentance means not merely sorrow for sin, but the actual turning away from sin and turning to God with the full purpose of obedience to God. Repentance is man's part, and forgiveness is God's part.

Ethically speaking, repentance means a change of character with self-sacrificing love as a guide to life. It means the subordination of selfish interests to the service of one's fellowmen. Repentance is not merely an "event," it is even more a "process." Repentance and the kingdom of God are definitely related. It implies a fundamental change in mental attitude and of moral purpose. *"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Mt. 5:20).

3. *Through conversion.* *"Except ye be converted,"* said Jesus, *"and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt. 18:3). When the disciples began questioning Jesus as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God, he told them that unless they would experience a complete "turning around" they would not enter the kingdom of God. Psychologically, to be converted means a "spontaneous awakening" to religious and moral issues. It is a perfectly normal experience. Theologically, it means a turning from selfishness to altruistic service through faith and penitence. In this respect conversion is closely related to repentance. Ethically speaking, conversion means a change of loyalties. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new. There is a change of loyalties from one set of

morals to another; from a lower level of life to a higher. In simple words, conversion means the adoption of the childlike spirit of faith and trust. This is the way to the kingdom of God.

4. *Through regeneration.* Nicodemus was thoroughly Platonic when he approached Jesus saying: "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." In Plato knowledge was the key to the kingdom of God. But Jesus informed Nicodemus that knowledge alone was not enough. "*Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God.*" (John 3:3). To know is all to the good, but what a man knows must lead to a moral change in life and purpose through the power of the Spirit of God.

Psychologically considered, regeneration means the birth of a new man through the birth of a new mind, and all through the indwelling Spirit of God. To be "regenerated" means to be re-created. Theologically considered, regeneration meant that the Spirit of God has become an abiding presence in the man, and that God is imparting the life which makes conformity to His will possible. Ethically considered, regeneration means a new sense of morals; a new sense of purpose, and a new power to attain those morals and to execute that purpose. Regeneration is not merely an "event," it is even more, it is a "process" which goes on through life. "*Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*" (II Cor. 4:16).

CONCLUSION

And so it is: men do enter the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God does enter men. God is in man, and man is in God. Jesus Christ is in man, and man is in Jesus Christ. The keys to the kingdom are

the key truths concerning Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Peter used those keys on the day of Pentecost and at Caesarea; he opened the door to the Jews and to the gentiles, and he left the keys in the door.

We may enter the kingdom of God here and now, and we enter through the experience of faith in God, repentance of sin and the forsaking of sin, through conversion and a change of loyalties, and through regeneration and the renewing of our minds, our hearts and our wills. Entering the kingdom of God is not merely an "event," it is also a lifetime "process."

LECTURE VIII

THE MEANING OF GOD IN LIFE

INTRODUCTION

1. *The approach to God.* When we approach the idea of God from the viewpoint of personality we call it theology; that is, God is a person. When we approach from the viewpoint of evidence we call it apologetics; that is, God is a reality. When we approach from the viewpoint of meaning we call it philosophy; that is, God is the answer to the meaning of life.

When a man sees only the world we have *materialism*. When he sees only God we have *pantheism*, and when he sees only man we have *humanism*. That is, the materialist sees only the world of things. The pantheist sees God and things as identical, and the humanist sees man as the center of the universe. But when we see all three—the world, God and man in proper perspective then we have *Christian theism*, and Christian theism is what the world needs.

In the present lecture we assume the existence of the world, the reality of God, and the significance of man, and we seek to know the meaning of God in His world and in man. God has meaning in His world. God has meaning in the life of man. Without God neither the world or man would have meaning.

2. *The idea of God.* No idea in all the world can make angel or beast out of man as can the idea of God. No idea can so completely moralize or demoralize a man as can the idea of God. The idea can elevate

a man to the level of divinity, or it can degrade him to the level of a demon. If in the mind of man God is good, loving, forgiving, then the idea elevates. If He is bad, cruel, revengeful and abusive then the idea degrades. It was in the name of God that men have done the best things and the worst things recorded on the pages of history. No idea among men is so good or so dangerous as is the idea of God. It is for this reason that we need to make certain that our idea of God is in harmony with the true nature and character of God.

3. *Analysis or reality.* It is good at times, and it is informing, to take a bird into the zoological laboratory and to dissect it and analyze it. But a canary torn to bits and scattered about over the dissecting table gives no song; it gives no action, and it gives no harmony of colors. Theologians, philosophers and logicians can analyze the God idea to the point where He loses all reality for the common man. It is the present purpose to make God real in the Christian experience.

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit," said an ancient to his God; *"Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, even there shall thy right hand lead me.* (Psa. 139:7-10). To this man God was very real. It is not an analysis of God that the world most needs today; it is an experience with God that we need. It is not the analysis of a cup of water that saves a man in the desert; it is drinking the water that saves him.

I. FAIR ASSUMPTIONS

There is such thing as axiomatic truth; self-evident truth. That parallel lines never meet is an axiomatic

truth. Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other is an axiomatic truth. We do not proceed to prove axioms; we assume that they are true, and we know that they are true for the reason that we solve our geometrical problems when we proceed on the assumption that they are true. The principle is no less true in the area of religion and theology. We rightly assume certain things to be true, and we know that they are true since they bring us to a solution of our problems. Concerning God it is entirely within the range of intelligence to assume several things.

1. *That the moving power back of this universe is not some-thing, but Some-One.* That which moves the universe is not a "thing," but a "person;" a Supreme Person. We say "person" because person implies mind, intelligence and purpose. Over the entire face of the universe is written large the evidence of mind, intelligence and purpose. The power that moves this universe is personal, not merely mechanical. Everything in the universe is *for* something. Everything in the universe is adapted to *ends*. From Adam to atom things and persons are adapted to appropriate ends. They are *for* something. "Some-One" is responsible for this, and this Some-One we call "God."

2. *That chance is not the answer.* Suppose, for example, we take the Bible, cut it into chapters, chapters into verses, verses into words, and words into letters. Take these letters to the top of the Empire State building and toss them out into a 100 mile per hour wind, how often would we need to do this until "by chance" they would fall back again into the pattern of the Bible? To expect such a thing would be just as reasonable as to suppose that the earth and the multiplied millions of stars and planets had fallen by chance into

the present pattern. It just would not make sense. The only intelligent thing to do is to assume that an omniscient, omnipotent and purposeful God, a Supreme Person, did it according to design. There must always be an adequate cause for every effect. Chance is not an adequate cause for this universe.

3. *That doubt and belief are related.* Doubt is not always a bad state of mind. Some of the greatest believers have at some time or other been great doubters. Doubt is sometimes evidence of intelligence. Some men know too much to believe everything that they hear, and still others know too little to doubt anything. Honest doubt is but the suspension of judgment or decision because of a lack of information or sufficient evidence. The more intelligent the person the more knowledge and the more evidence is demanded for belief. "Doubting Thomas" may have been more intelligent than some of the rest of the disciples. An ignorant man seldom demands evidence. It is the thinking mind that calls for more knowledge and more evidence. Doubt and belief are related. There is much of each in the other.

4. *That belief in the reality of God represents the intelligent state of mind.* It has been truthfully said by someone that some men deny at the top of their minds what they really believe at the bottom of their hearts. The mind believes more sometimes than it is willing to admit. The mind and the heart of some men are engaged in constant conflict. The heart says "yes," and the mind says "no." The mind says "no," not because it does not believe, but because it simply does not want to admit the truth. To admit the truth often demands a change in a man's life, and change he does not want to make. Then there are some men who just

do not like God, so they deny that such a person exists. The mind of man has been built with capacity to believe, and to believe is the normal and the intelligent state of mind.

II. WHO IS GOD

We do not know God by definition. We know Him by description. Most of the things that we know in this world we know by description; by the way they work. We know electricity, not by definition, but by the way that it works. We know God by the way He works; the way He works in nature, in man, and in Jesus Christ. In nature we have mind in action. In man we have will in action, and in Jesus of Nazareth we have divine love in action. In these three areas we have the mind of God, the will of God, and the love of God in action. A cup of water from the ocean will not tell us everything about the ocean, but what it does tell us is true. Our Bible and our Christian experience do not tell us everything about God, but what they do tell us is trustworthy.

1. *What God is not.* One way to approach the truth concerning a person or an object is through the process of elimination. We may say that the object or the person is not this or not that. With every elimination we approach more nearly the truth. Concerning the Christian God, we may be certain that He is not:

1) *A myth.* Indeed, myth has a legitimate place in the transfer of truth from mind to mind, from generation to generation, and from century to century. A myth is a story, the origin of which is forgotten, and is used to explain some practice, belief or institution. A mythical person is one whose existence is imaginary

and not verifiable. God, in the Christian faith, is not a myth. His existence is more than imaginary, and it is verifiable, not only on the basis of an outer world of observation, but on the basis of an inner world of experience. The Christian faith and belief in God and His work in nature, in man and in Christ can not be satisfactorily or intelligently explained on the basis of a myth. Our ideas concerning God may have been influenced by myth, but God Himself did not originate in myth or in imagination.

2) *A theory.* Theory, like myth, has its place in the mental and intellectual technique of man. A theory is an attempted explanation based on observation and reasoning rather than on fact. This is perfectly legitimate in our quest for truth. But a theory is not a fact. It is a supposed fact. Any man has a right to be mistaken in his theory, but he has no right to be mistaken in facts.

The ocean liner—the Titanic, some years ago, was a theory. The theory was “non-sinkable.” But when on a moonlight night out there in the Atlantic ocean that theory met with a cold fact—the iceberg, the theory went miles to the bottom of the ocean, but the fact went right along on its way. When theory meets fact, theory must give way, and fact remains. God is more than theory. Theory, observation and reason can bring us a long way in our quest for God, but it is experience that brings us finally to God.

3) *A postulate.* The postulate, like the myth and theory, has its legitimate place in the constitution of the human mind. A postulate is something taken for granted or assumed as a basis for reasoning. It is a necessary condition for the explanation of what one believes to be a fact. For example: in geometry

we "postulate" that a straight line may be drawn between any two points. A postulate is an "indemonstrable practical or moral hypothesis, such as the reality of God, freedom or immortality, belief in which is necessary for the performance of our moral duty." (Dict. Phil.—p. 244). It is perfectly legitimate to "postulate" the reality of God as a necessity for the explanation of the world in which we live, and for moral conduct. But God is more than a postulate, and His origin can not be explained on mere postulate.

2. *Who is God.* There are about as many ideas concerning who God is as there are people. This is because every man thinks of God in terms of his own experience. For Moses God is *with* you. For Plato God is *above* you. For Jesus God is *with* you, God is *above* you, and God is *in* you. (I John 4:16).

For the philosopher, God is the Eternal Mind, Ultimate Reality. For the mystic, God is Absolute Being behind all phenomena. For Jesus, God is supreme will and works always through love and righteousness. For the philosopher, the way to God is to elevate our reason to the place where we can "think His thoughts after Him." For the mystic, the pathway to God is withdrawal from the world of sense into the inner sanctuary of the soul. But for Jesus, the way to God is participation in the will of God. Philosophical and mystical knowledge are all to the good, but alone are not enough. We become children of God, we enter the kingdom of God only as we act in the finite area as He acts in the infinite area.

According to the Christian Scriptures God is the "personification of superlative excellence." The scriptures do not use these words, but the deduction that God is the personification of superlative excellence is

justifiable on the bases of the scriptures. This superlative excellence we may observe in three areas when we remember:

1) *That God is love.* We do not know love by definition. We know love by experience. "*God is love,*" saith the scriptures, "*and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God is him.*" (I John 4:16). In Christian thought God is love, and love is God. The Greek "eros-love" and Christian "agape-love" are not the same thing by any means. "Eros-love" is mere human love full of desire and self-interest, while "agape-love," Christian love, is creative, unselfish, and freely giving of itself. In nature, in man and in Jesus God reveals Himself as love—creative, self-giving and without limit. "*Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby we know that we are in Him.*" (I John 2:5). Love is an experience, and God is love. He that has an experience with divine love has an experience with God.

2) *That God is light.* There are two kinds of light in this world—cosmic and spiritual. There is the sun that lights the outside of a man's life, and there is the light of God that lights the inside of a man's life. The Christian scriptures tell us that "*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*" (I John 1:5). The light of God is a form of spiritual radiant energy that operates in the mind of man. Jesus, God in the flesh, "*was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*" (John 1:9). The light of God is the light of knowledge, the light of spiritual illumination. No night can be so dark as to extinguish the light of the smallest candle, nor can there be sufficient moral and spiritual darkness in this world to extinguish the light of God that breaks forth from Calvary.

3) *That God is life.* Life, scientists tell us, is the greatest of all mysteries, and yet it is greatest of all facts. How life comes into a plant or an animal, and then moves out we do not know. From whence it came and whither it has gone we may not know. To say that God is life does not define God. It only tells us something about how He operates. Certainly, God is the source of all life as well as the destiny. To Thomas Jesus said: "*I am the way, the Truth, and the life.*" (John 14:6). He also said on one occasion: "*I and my Father are one,*" (John 10:30), and "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*" (John 14:9). In each of these sayings it seems that the life of God and the life of Jesus are identical. It must be true, as a wise Rabbi once said in my presence: "If God is anywhere in this world, He must be in the direction of someone like Jesus of Nazareth." God is life—spiritual and eternal life.

III. THE MEANING OF GOD IN LIFE

God in a man's life lifts him from a lower to a higher level. It lifts him above his natural horizons, extends his vision beyond time into eternity, re-enforces his limited powers, and reveals to him the Divine purpose in the world. The God who was once only a name now becomes a "Presence" and a living reality. Now all of this has meaning. It means at least three things:

1. *Peace.* The peace of which I speak is something more than the absence of war. It is an inner state of mind. "*Acquaint thyself with Him*" (God), said Eliphaz to Job, "*and be at peace.*" Good advice it is to any man. Peace of mind and soul is the product of the presence of God in the life of a man. "*Peace I leave with you,*" said Jesus, "*my peace I give unto you.*"

(John 14:27). "*Great peace have they that love thy law,*" wrote an ancient poet. (Psa. 119:165).

The attempt to "escape" from society is not the way to peace. Peace of mind, at times, must be obtained in the midst of chaotic society. To withdraw from a hard world is not the pathway to peace. Monastic seclusion is not the way to peace. Peace comes through inner fortification through the presence of God. Intellectual and philosophical speculations are all to the good, but alone will not bring peace. Psychoanalysis and psycho-therapy are all good enough, but in themselves will not bring peace.

There can be no peace of mind and soul until a man comes to terms with the Eternal. Sin is the arch enemy of peace. Sin disrupts the relationship between God and man, and between man and man, and it produces conflict within the man himself. Alienation from God, conflict within oneself, and friction between oneself and his fellows destroys peace. Peace of mind and soul comes only when one comes to terms with the Eternal God.

The presence of God in a man's life brings conviction. Then through an act of will the man must surrender to the will of God, to the highest that he knows. Following this surrender comes peace. Peace and the presence of God belong together. The peace of God in the soul gives assurance and fortitude even in the midst of a world of chaos.

2. *Purpose.* The man without an eternal purpose is like a ship without a pilot. I say "eternal purpose," for the reason that purpose must take a man beyond the cemetery. Unless there is purpose in the universe and in man the whole affair does not make sense. Unless there is some end toward which we move this

world is meaningless. We may not always know perfectly what that end is, or what that purpose may be, yet we may intelligently believe that there is purpose and that there is a supreme end toward which we are moving, and that the Eternal God ordains that purpose and directs to that end.

God has a purpose in this universe and when He enters a man's life that purpose also enters. God in a man's life means that the purpose of God and the purpose of man have been federated and have become one purpose. It means that man has adopted the purpose of God as his purpose and that henceforth man cooperates with God in His work in the world, and that work is the establishment of His kingdom. "*Thy kingdom come; thy will be done,*" is the story. Nothing gives stability and equilibrium to one's life as does the eternal divine purpose.

Purpose in the universe and in man means that God is at work in his world. It means that man is *for* something. The man motivated by that divine purpose sees something meaningful and intelligent going on in the universe as well as in himself. Some valuable end is being pursued. There is a distant goal toward which the entire creation is moving; a goal in which man himself may participate. That goal is the eternal kingdom of God.

3. *Power.* Many of the would-be-saviors of mankind have offered great and inviting goals for humanity, but they furnished no power, no spiritual dynamics, to attain those goals. Many of the pagan religions offer good and attractive ideals, but supply no power to attain those ideals. In the Christian way God not only sets ideals, purposes and goals; He also gives adequate power to attain those ideals, those purposes,

and those goals. The aim of Jesus was not so much to institute a new ethic, but to supply power by which men could act on what they already knew to be their duty. The emphasis in the Sermon on the Mount was on the words: "*He that doeth the will of my Father.*" (Mt. 7:21).

One of the last statements of Jesus to his disciples was: "*Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you.*" In other words, when God comes into a man's life, the power of God also comes in. According to Paul "Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. It is this wisdom and this power of Christ that enters the life of man and makes him a center and a distributor of the wisdom and the power of God. This wisdom and this power releases the intellectual potentials of the human mind. It releases the love potentials of the human heart, and it releases the volitional potentials of the human will. This universe is not big enough to stop the man with this power in his life. It makes a man bigger and stronger than anything that can happen to him.

CONCLUSION

And so it is. Depending on a man's idea of God, belief in Him can mean good or it can mean evil. As a man grows in his moral and ethical ideals his idea of God also grows. That God is real, and that He is the moving power back of this universe none can successfully deny. Chance is not the answer to the existence of the universe and the human mind. God is more than a myth; more than a theory, and more than a postulate. God is Love. God is Light, and God is Life. When this God comes into the life experience of a man it means peace. It means purpose, and it means power.

LECTURE IX

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

INTRODUCTION

1. *Universe and atom.* The universe, the atom and man are related, and in some respects similar. The sun, the moon, the planets, the earth and stars constitute a great universe. The atom composed of protons and electrons—positive and negative electrical units, is a great universe. But man, a “person,” constituted of mind, and heart and will, is the greatest universe that God ever made. The physical universe we study with the telescope and the microscope, but man we explore with psychology, philosophy and anthropology. Just as the atom is composed of protons and electrons—positive and negative units, so also man exhibits positive and negative units—good and evil. It seems that there is “Natural Law In The Spiritual World.” How to amplify the positive and minimize the negative qualities in man is the task of the Christian life.

2. *The double self.* To the thoughtful man it is clearly evident that he is a kind of double self; a self that desires the good, and the self that leans toward the evil. A good man is often torn between the good and the evil. St. Paul, in the seventh chapter of Romans, gives us a mental picture of such a man. “*For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do.*” This is a common and a normal experience. There is the desire to do good.

and there is always the tendency to do evil. The purpose of the Christian life is to stimulate the desire for good and to do good, and to minimize the tendency toward evil. Sin is not merely an act. Sin is essentially a motive. It is what a man *is*, and not alone what he *does*, that determines whether he is saint or sinner. Human nature is so constituted that it can respond to both good and evil. The purpose of the Christian life is to direct response toward the good.

3. *The Christian life.* The Christian life is a life lived in relation to a world of a higher order; a life in relation to an Above and a Beyond on which a man feels dependent, and to which he feels under obligation. It is in this Divine-human relationship that a man finds the meaning of life, and in which he finds completion for his life. The Christian life is a life that gives man insight into ultimate reality, and the meaning of final ends, and it is mediated between God and man through Jesus Christ.

It is the Christian life that introduces man to fellowship with the Eternal, adjusts him to the universe in which he must live, and gives peace, purpose and power to his life. It is a life motivated by love, inspired by the truth, and stimulated by hope. It is a life characterized by a man's total response to God; a life lived in and through Jesus Christ. It is a life distinguished by correct beliefs, acceptable worship and righteous action.

It may not be too much to say that the Christian life is the fulfillment of the quest of every religion. When the prophet Haggai wrote: "The desire of all nations shall come," he was writing no idle words. Time, observation and experience have shown that Jesus Christ, the Christian way of life, is the fulfillment

of universal religious human desire; the desire for freedom, security and peace. In the Christian way of life we have a cross to which nothing need be added, and we have an open tomb that can never again be closed.

Most non-Christian religions have no welcome for the sinner until he quits being a sinner. They would first make the sinner righteous and then admit him to God. But in the Christian way God in Christ first extends a welcome to the sinner and then redeems him. The non-Christian religions *demand* a new life. The Christian religion *gives* the new life. The Christian religion brings man to God by bringing God to man in Christ.

I. THE BEGINNINGS

Just when, where and how does the Christian life begin in a man? Does a man at some decisive point in time become a Christian, or does he gradually grow into it from childhood? Is it an event, or is it a process? Is the Christian life a form of spiritual and moral infection, something that a man takes on from the outside, or is it a natural development from the inside? Does a man "get" Christianity, or does Christianity get the man? Is human nature all black when it enters this world, or is it all white? Is a zebra a black animal with white stripes, or is he a white animal with black stripes? Just what is the urge that moves a man to live the Christian life?

Whether we take the position of John Calvin of "total depravity," or of Schleiermacher of "absolute dependence," or of Ritschl and his "value-judgments," or of Karl Barth and his "otherness of God," or his "helplessness of death-doomed man," or Brunner's "Divine-Human Encounter," is not the first concern of

the moment. Our present concern is *the distressing sense of dissatisfaction of man with himself*; the experience of St. Paul in Romans 7.

This sense of dissatisfaction some present day theologians call a "given." That is, something given directly by God to the totally corrupt and sinful man. The idea is that a man could not even experience dissatisfaction, or the desire to live the Christian life, if it were not given to him directly from God. This would then mean that the Christian life has its beginnings in a direct superhuman work of grace.

Whatever position one may take on this point it is evident, I think, that both God and man have to do with the beginnings of the Christian life in a man. Both God and man are responsible for the sense of dissatisfaction which results when a man sees himself as he is in contrast with the man (Jesus Christ) that he should be. This dissatisfaction is due to three things:

1. *The inability to live up to one's ideals.* Saul of Tarsus was not a man without high ideals; he was a man zealous for righteousness according to the Mosaic law. The problem in his life was in the fact that he could not live up to the high ideals which he held concerning the law of God. The law was holy, just and good. The will to do was present with him, but how to perform that which he knew to be good seemed to be beyond him. (Rom. 7).

The experience of Paul was not an uncommon experience. It is this dissatisfaction of a man with himself in his inability to live up to the best and the highest that he knows, that forms the home base for the Christian life. Indeed, this dissatisfaction is due in large measure to the work of the spirit of God in

a man. (John 16:8). It is this dissatisfaction of a man with himself that leads him with Paul to his: "*O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" (Rom. 7:24).

2. *The feeling of one's separation from God.* The Job experience: "*Oh that I knew where I might find Him!*" is a common experience among thoughtful men. It is the nature of the human soul to desire and to seek union and fellowship with the Eternal. It is this aloneness, the sense of separation from God, that drives men in quest for God. The soul that is adrift on the uncertain and uncharted sea of life is ill at ease.

Man can not cut loose from the source of his existence and live the normal life. God and man belong together. There is something of each in the other. To be sure, man is an independent creation; he is also dependent. It is this sense of aloneness, this separation from God, that brings men to seek God in the Christian life. The common meeting ground between God and man is in the Christian life, and this because the Christian life brings the mind, the heart and the will of God and man together. God has no other way of working in man in this world than through the mind, the heart and the will of man.

3. *The sense of ruinous temptation.* Medical and psychological experts tell us that the *sense of falling* appears very early in child life. To "hold on" seems to be among the first native instincts to find expression. Temptation, the urge to do something wrong on the offer of pleasure or some advantage, to thoughtful men, means only an invitation to fall morally and spiritually, perhaps eternally. The "fall of man" (Gen. 3), evidently is related to the innate sense of falling.

Be that as it may, the fact that "*the soul that sin-*

neth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4), can not be erased from human consciousness. Men know that sin leads to death. Men know also that sin is the result of yielding to temptation. The presence of temptation, the invitation to wrong doing, is a source of inner and personal dissatisfaction, and it is this dissatisfaction and the fact of human weakness to resist temptation, that starts men in their quest for a Power capable of meeting and resisting temptation.

So it is; the inability to live up to our highest ideals, the feeling of separation from God, and the sense of ruinous temptations, are responsible in the average man for that distressing sense of dissatisfaction which forms the starting point for the Christian life. It is the way of the Christ to make men dissatisfied with anything and everything that is at variance with himself. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness," says the sweet singer of Israel. (Psa. 17:15).

II. NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

There are two experiences that differentiate the Christian life from the non-Christian namely, growth in Christlikeness, and a new richness. Some one has said that Christianity is unlike all other world religions in that it is a fact in history, and it centers in a person. And we may add that that person is Jesus of Nazareth. Christianity was an experience in the souls of men before it was a doctrine, before there was a Church, or before there was a Bible. All of these are products of Christianity, and not the source of Christianity. The essential nature of the Christian life we may observe in two areas:

1. *Growth in Christlikeness.* One of the early

apostles urged his readers to "*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" (II Pet. 3:18). The Christian life is a life of growth. Where there is no growth there can not long be life. The Christian man grows in Christlikeness. Christian men grow in knowledge, in affection, and in purpose, and such growth means three things:

1) *Victorious living.* To be a Christian does not mean to be a defeatist. Christianity is not a quitter's religion. "*This is the victory,*" says John, "*that overcometh the world, even our faith.*" (I John 5:4). The Christian man does not meekly and resistlessly acquiesce to things as they are and simply "let the world go by." The Christian life is a life of mastery; a life in which sin is conquered.

To be a Christian means to be on the offensive; not the defensive. In the Christian life we not only "hold the fort," we conquer new ones. In the Christian way sin is accepted as a reality as well as is righteousness. The way of mastery is the Christian way with sin. "*In all these things,*" says the apostle Paul, "*we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*" (Rom. 8:37). The way of Jesus is the way of the conqueror. To grow in Christlikeness means conquering sin in ourselves and in the world.

2) *Efficient living.* "Efficiency" has been a much used word in this 20th century. We demand efficiency in our factories, our machinery, our government, our schools and our Churches. Our present problem is not in mechanical or industrial efficiency, but in spiritual, moral, educational, ethical and religious efficiency. Had our moral and religious efficiency kept pace with our scientific and industrial the present world crisis would not be upon us.

It is doubtless true that the average person today is only about 10% efficient, with the 90% yet to be attained. Personal waste in individual living is as real and as unfortunate as is material waste. The potentialities of the human mind, the human heart, and the human will represent the greatest waste among men today. To conserve the human mind for truth, the human heart for love, and the human will for purpose is the essential task of the Christian life. That is what we mean by "being saved." A man is saved when his mind is saved. A man is saved when his heart is saved. A man is saved when his will is saved. Efficiency in the truth; efficiency in divine love, and efficiency in the divine purpose, this is the way of the Christian life.

3) *Powerful living.* Someone has said that "It is hard for an empty bag to stand alone." Man without God in his life is an empty bag. Life without God is an empty life. Good intentions and high ideals with no power to execute is a road that leads to nowhere. For the good that I would like to do, says Paul, I do not. There are many people who would do good, but the power to do is not there. Paul believed that he could do all things needful through Christ who was his strength. (Phil. 4:13). It is through the power of the indwelling Christ that men enter the experience of powerful living.

The work of Christ in a man is that of changing that man from a small, ineffective and detached unit into a fixed part of a mighty whole. The power of Christ in a man's life joins the man with the power in and back of the universe. The same power represented in God comes now to function in the man, and this means powerful living.

2. *A new richness.* There is a value content in the Christian life that is not found in any other way of life. Saint Paul was conscious of this fact when he wrote: "*That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. . .*" (Eph. 1:18). In three essential areas the Christian way of life adds a new richness.

1) *In the meaning of life.* Life is the greatest and most evident of all facts. It is also the greatest of all mysteries. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for life to define itself objectively. The fact of life is not the problem of the moment. The problem is the meaning and the purpose of life. Does human life have any meaning other than the life of an animal or a tree? To date the Christian faith has proposed the most reasonable answer.

The Christian way of life proposes that regardless of problems, perplexities, difficulties, tragedies, pain, suffering and even death, life is many times worth the living because it has meaning. Life, in the Christian way, is an avenue through which the eternal finds expression for Himself. As the watch maker finds expression for himself through his creation; as the artist finds expression for himself through his painting; as the musician finds expression for his soul through the grand organ, so God finds expression for Himself through human life. The Superhuman finds expression through the human. It is a great thing to be even a violin when a Stradivarius finds expression for himself through that violin. It is a greater thing to be a human personality when the Eternal finds expression for Himself through that personality. Such an interpretation of life adds a new richness to the meaning of life.

2) *In the purpose of life.* The meaning and the purpose of life are closely related. The purpose of life, according to the Christian faith, is not to explain life, but to live it. To "exist" is one thing, to "live" is quite another thing. A stone can exist, but it can not live. The purpose of life is to live, and to live to the fullest. "To live and to let live," is all very good. But to "live and help live" is better. No man can live his best as an isolated individual. We are members one of another. In life God and man belong together. There is something of God in every man, and there is something of every man in God.

The purpose of life Jesus stated very clearly when he said: "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" (John 10:10). The "abundant" life is the overflowing life. It is not the size of the cup that determines the joy and the efficiency of life; it is the amount that the cup overflows. It is not what a man holds that gives him life and happiness; it is what he overflows. At Niagara Falls a pint cup can overflow as much as can a ten gallon jar. It is the overflow of life that counts. That the lives of men might overflow with the goodness of God was the purpose of Jesus in coming to this world. This is the purpose of life—the abundant life; the overflowing life. Men live on the overflow, not only on what they hold. Such an interpretation of life adds new richness to life.

3) *In the goal of life.* Starting points and destinies are always related. There is something of each in the other. If man started in eternity with God, as he did, then his destiny must be somewhere in the same area. Just where is man anyway when life on earth has served its purpose? What sort of person is he, and

where is he? The Christian life has an answer, and up to the present moment it has the best answer. It has an answer that satisfies the deepest demands of the human soul.

The significance of man and the value of man must be judged not only on the basis of his origin, but also on the basis of his destiny. A man is not only a "has been," he is also a "yet-to-be." We judge a machine not only by its origin, but also by what it is able to accomplish. We judge men not only on the basis of origin, but also on the basis of what it is possible for them to attain. It is in the possible goal of life that the Christian way adds new richness.

According to the Christian way of life it is possible for man to attain *membership in the eternal kingdom of God*. The goal of human life is here and hereafter. It is now and it is then. It is present and it is future. Death may mark the end of a chapter, but never the end of the book. Death may be the period at the end of a sentence, but it is never the end of the chapter. Death may mark the end of a battle, but never the end of the campaign. The goal of the Christian life is the eternal kingdom of God in the likeness of Jesus Christ. This interpretation of the goal of life adds new richness to life.

III. HOW SHALL WE CULTIVATE

God supplies the cedars of Lebanon but Solomon must build the temple. God supplies the stone but men must build the cathedral. God supplies the grain, but men must plant and cultivate. God supplies the truth but men must plant it in their minds and hearts and give it cultivation. The Christian life is the product of sympathetic cooperation between man and God. If

we are to grow in the Christian life there are some things we need to do.

1. *Take time to inform ourselves.* “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,*” says Hosea. It is no less true today. Our religious ignorance today has a magnitude and a dimension which can be described only in terms astronomical. The lack of knowledge is one of the great enemies of the Christian life. People simply do not take time to inform themselves. The apostle Paul was aware of the importance of religious knowledge when he advised Timothy to “*study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.*” Ignorance is the worst of slave drivers. Ignorance is a hard and unrewarding master.

If we are to grow in the Christian life there are three particular areas in which we need to inform ourselves namely, God, man and the world in which we live. We need to know the nature, the purpose and the will of God. We need to know the nature and the destiny of man, and we need to know the purpose and the place of the world in the economy of God. If we are to grow in the Christian life we must acquaint ourselves with things not only of time, but with things of eternity. The mind of man has been given of God for this purpose, and we must use it.

2. *Take time to think.* “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things,*” so urges the apostle Paul. (Phil. 4:8). The capacity to think and to reason is the great endowment of the human mind. God must have had great confidence in the human mind when he

said: "Come now, and let us reason together." (Isa. 1:18).

To think and to reason means to manipulate truth and ideas in the solution of problems. Thinking is problem-solving. Thinking is a labor-saving and a trouble-saving device. Thoughtlessness has meant no end to troubles for many people. It is probably true as some one has said that 90% of the people never think, and that the other 10% seldom do. To teach people *how to think, rather than what to think* is the major purpose of Christian education.

3. *Take time to pray.* If we hope to talk with God in eternity we must learn the language in time. If we hope to walk with God over there we must learn to walk with him here. Prayer is not only good religion; it is also good psychology and good philosophy. Prayer is not essentially a matter of *communication*; it is rather a matter of *communion*. Christian prayer is not essentially a matter of man talking to God; it is rather a matter of God talking to man. Indeed, "prayer changes things;" but it changes things at my end of the line rather than at God's end.

Art appreciation means simply that one has entered into communion with the artist. We catch his vision and we appreciate his idea. Music appreciation means simply that one has entered the spirit of the producer. Prayer is a form of communion with the Eternal. One can not appreciate things eternal and Divine without spending time in communion with the Eternal and the Divine. This is the meaning of Christian prayer. Apart from this communion one can not cultivate the Christian life.

4. *Take time to serve.* The psychic laws of impression and expression belong together. There is

something of each in the other. Impressions with no adequate avenues for expression often leads to disastrous results. The physical body can not constantly receive food without some normal means of exercise in the use of the energy created by the food. The mind and the spirit of man can not live alone on impressions, good though those impressions may be. There must be opportunity for expression, and this expression, for the Christian, means service. Hard work was not ordained as a penalty on sin, but as a blessing for the prevention of sin.

Christian service is not merely an end in itself. Christian service does something to the inner spiritual life of the servant. The blessings of service move in two directions, that of the served and the servant. Richness is added to both. Did not Jesus teach us that he who would be great among us should be the servant of all? Greatness is not a thing to be sought as a thing in itself. Greatness is a by-product of humble service. To deepen and enrich our Christian life we must take time to serve. While the Samaritan was enriching his life in service the Priest and the Levite were starving theirs by passing by.

CONCLUSION

For nearly two millenniums now the Christian way of life has proved to be the supreme way and the most satisfactory way of life. It is a life lived in relationship of love with the Above and the Beyond. It is a life lived in fellowship with the Eternal. It is the sense of dissatisfaction in a man not being able to live up to his highest ideals, the sense of separation from God, and the fact of ruinous temptation to sin that leads men to the Christian way of life.

In its nature the Christian life is Christlikeness in that it gives victory over sin. It gives efficiency and power to live up to one's ideals. Its nature also obtains in a new richness in the meaning of life, the purpose of life, and in a new goal in life. This life, the Christian life, is cultured and sustained only to the extent that we inform ourselves in things religious and spiritual; only to the extent that we think, pray and serve.

LECTURE

X

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION

1. *Paul and the cross.* The apostle Paul was a firm believer in the cross of Christ. He was an effective preacher of the cross. In practically every place that he went he preached the cross with conviction and courage with the result that Churches were established. There is something in the cross of Christ that makes a tremendous appeal to the human soul. "*The preaching of the cross,*" says Paul, "*is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . For the Jew requires a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jew a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jew and Greek, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*" (I Cor. 1:18f.). Orthodox Jewish religion saw in the cross only a stumbling-block. Greek philosophy saw only foolishness, but the Christian believer saw both the power and the wisdom of God.

2. *Faith and mystery.* Some one has aptly said that we can not hope to reduce the oceanic mysteries of God to the tin cup of human reason. To this statement we may add that it is too much for us to hope that we may reduce the eternal mystery of the cross to the limited dimensions of time and space between the

cradle and the grave. God, love and the cross are infinite in their reach. The human mind is finite and limited. We can not comprehend; we can only apprehend. While reason keeps on puzzling itself about the mystery of the cross, faith turns that mystery into spiritual food and lives by it. We dare not miss the crown by stumbling at the cross.

3. *Explain or believe.* All thinking men, in whatever area—science, philosophy, anthropology or religion, believe many things that they can not explain. Men do not live on explanations. Men live on believing. I do not explain radio activity; I believe it. I do not explain the union of hydrogen and oxygen in the production of water; I believe it. I do not explain the fact that parallel never meet; I believe it. I do not explain the Einstein theory of relativity; I believe it. I do not explain God; I believe Him. I do not explain Christ; I believe him. I do not explain the cross of Christ; I believe it. Explanations, when we can have them, are all to the good, but it is not explanations that save men from sin and restores them to fellowship with God; it is belief that saves and restores men.

4. *The symbol.* The cross of Christ is not a fetish, an object possessed of magical powers. The cross of Christ is not magic, possessed of some mysterious power of enchantment. The cross of Christ is a symbol; a symbol that represents the mind and purpose of God in man and in the world. There is no saving virtue in a mere wooden cross. The saving virtue is in what God meant in the cross, and what God meant was love, wisdom and power.

Or, to be a bit more explicit, we may say that the cross of Christ symbolizes three things namely, (1)

The sinfulness of sin. (2) The judgement of God on sin, and (3) The redeeming love of God by which He creates new men in Jesus Christ. Love can be best known with sin in the back-ground and with grace in the fore-ground. Love can be best known in the light of suffering on the one hand, and in the light of blessedness on the other. The cross of Christ stands between sin and grace; between suffering and blessedness. When Jesus went on that cross it was a pagan instrument of torture. When he came from that cross it was a symbol of the loving redemption of God.

I. THE APPROACH

When John "saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven . . ." he saw that the city was foursquare. He saw "on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates, and on the west three gates." (Rev. 21). In our interpretation of the cross we may approach from more than one side. The cross of Christ has meaning and significance in more than one area.

1. *The historical.* From the point of view of history the cross is *an event*. It was in the cross that two worlds, the pagan and the Christian, met in head-on collision nearly 2,000 years ago. It was in the cross that the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God met in mortal conflict, with the victory on the side of the kingdom of God. It was in the cross that a pagan civilization and a Christian order clashed in decisive conflict. In human history the cross is an event, and history has so recorded it. But the cross is infinitely more than an historic event.

2. *The theological.* From the point of view of theology the cross is *a faith*; something that God meant. In theology we would say that the cross symbolizes

the truth, the faith, that God in Christ is a suffering God in the redemption of man. What God meant was that the just suffer vicariously and redemptively for the unjust. It was in the crucified that God "was wounded for our transgression. He was bruised for our iniquities." (Isa. 53:5). In the cross God suffers even today, not by compulsion, but by loving choice. God in Christ dies not in anger, but in kindness; not in despair, but in hope. In the cross God means life in dying. A paradox to be sure, but this is the Christian faith.

3. *The philosophical.* From the point of view of Christian philosophy the cross of Christ is an *interpretation*; something that has meaning. Indeed, Greek philosophy saw in the cross only foolishness, and the Jewish theologian saw only a stumbling-block. The why of such interpretation on the part of the Greek and the Jew obtains in the fact that the cross had not entered the experience of either Greek or Jew. That cross means only foolishness to the Greek because he could not see why a good God who was independent of the world should enter into a sinful world in Christ and subject Himself to suffering for the sake of man who was far beneath Him. All materials, said the Greek philosopher, are inherently evil, and therefore it would be inconceivable to think that an infinitely good God would take up His abode in a material human body. Foolishness!

But the Christian philosophy does not hold that all material is inherently evil. In the Christian philosophy the cross is an interpretation of a loving God who suffers vicariously in the redemption of His creation. That cross is an interpretation of sin—the world's worst, and of love—God's best.

4. *The religious.* From the point of view of religion the cross of Christ is *an experience*. Regardless of what a man claims to believe, unless what he claims to believe registers in his experience that belief is of no avail. Belief and experience must correspond. In the Christian faith the cross of Christ is an experience of the wisdom and the power of God. The cross is the experience of eternal life here and now. It is the experience of atonement in which while "we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6.) Apart from this experience the cross of Christ is without meaning in our religion.

II. THE END OF THE ROAD

In his book—Christian Doctrine, Dr. J. S. Whale says that "The cross is the place where one long road ends and a new road begins" (p. 76). Then he adds that the cross is a monument of two abiding facts namely, (1) That man's age-long quest for reconciliation through sacrifice was not meaningless, and (2) That the cross reveals an old truth in a new, victorious and final way, namely, that atonement must be and is the work of God alone.

The "place where one long road ends and a new road begins," is the significant statement for the moment. Of all the things that may be said of the cross of Christ it is certainly true that it marks the end of a long and blundering road of man and the beginning of a new. In fact, the cross marks the end of a number of old roads and the beginning of a number of new roads.

1. *The end of the law and the beginning of the gospel.* In the experience of the apostle Paul the Mosaic law had its place, but it was a failure in pro-

ducing righteousness, and it came to an end at the cross. "*The law*" says Paul, "*was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. . . . After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*" (Gal. 3:24-25). "For I was alive without the law once," says Paul, "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." (Rom. 7:9-10).

To be sure, Moses had his place, and a large place, but he ended at the cross of Christ. And certainly, the Levitical ceremonies had their place, and a valuable place, but they all came to an end at the cross of Christ. The cross marks the end of that long road of legalism and the beginning of the new road, the Christian gospel, the good news of God in Christ.

2. *The end of sin and the beginning of repentance.* Along the old road of the Mosaic law "almost all things are by the law purged with blood and without shedding of blood is no remission," the remission of sin not excepted. (Heb. 9:22). The first sentence of a book, a chapter or a sermon is always important. It should more or less epitomize all that follows. Jesus begins his ministry with one word namely, "repent." This word stands at the entrance of a new road, and it indicates the course of the ministry of Jesus. The sin road on which men for centuries have been traveling must come to an end, and the "*repent ye*" road must begin. The long road of human sin can not by-pass the cross. That road must end and a new road must begin. When a sinful man comes to the cross a penitent man begins.

3. *The end of guilt and the beginning of forgiveness.* The violation of Divine law results in guilt, and following closely on the road of guilt comes condemnation. The only escape from guilt and condemnation

is forgiveness, and suspension of penalty. The suspension of penalty does not mean that the guilty man is now innocent. It only means that the penalty for his sin has been lifted. The apostle Paul would certainly testify to the fact that the cross of Christ meant the end of that long road of guilt and the beginning of the new road of forgiveness. The road of guilt is a hard road; it leads down hill and to a bad end. The road of forgiveness is the happy road, and it leads upward all the way to a good end. When Jesus on the cross prayed: *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,"* (Lk. 23:34), he brought to an end the old road of guilt, and opened the new road of forgiveness.

4. *The end of the curse and the beginning of grace.* It is no surprise to learn that the long road of human sin in the violation of Divine law should terminate in a curse. And it should be no surprise to observe that the Old Testament ends with the word "curse." What other word can follow on the road of sin? *"Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this commandment, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt. . . ."* (Jer. 11:3-4). And then the closing warning of the Old Testament: *"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant. . . . Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."* (Mal. 4:4-6). What other words than "curse" could follow

→ And it should be no surprise to find that the New Testament closes with: *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Sinai?"*

Christ be with you all." (Rev. 22:21). What other word can follow Calvary other than the word "grace," undeserved mercy? It is no accident that the cross stands between the curse pronounced on sin, and grace that has been extended to the sinner. Calvary stands between Sinai and the holy city. Calvary marks the end of the curse and the beginning of grace.

5. *The end of war and the beginning of peace.* "The dagger and the cross" do not belong together. The cross of Christ marks the end of the dagger and the beginning of the "bread" and the "cup," the end of the battlefield and the beginning of the communion table. The cross marks the end of the war road and the beginning of the peace road. The dagger and the cross do not belong in the same hands. I can see no possible way for a Christian minister to carry a dagger in one hand and the communion cup in the other. It just does not make sense. A showman can ride two horses at the same time so long as the horses are moving in the same direction, but when they are moving in opposite it is impossible. The Christ and war, the communion cup and the dagger, are not moving in the same direction, or toward the same goals. The Christian Church can not drive the dagger into the heart of an enemy on one hand and place the communion cup into the hand of a saint on the other.

Jesus, you will remember, was crucified between two thieves. The one thief could not swear at the other without swearing past the crucified Christ. The other could not rail back without railing past the crucified Christ. Today the crucified hangs between the warring nations. Every bullet, every tank and every bombing plane sent into the ranks of the enemy must go past the crucified. The "Christ of the Andes" is not

without significance. Some day the world will know the meaning of the cross.

III. THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

It is better to have the experience of the cross without explanation than to have the explanation without the experience. What the man in the desert dying of thirst needs is not the scientific analysis or explanation of a cup of cold water. What that man needs is to drink the water. To analyze that cup of water may be far beyond his capacity, but to drink it and live is entirely within his experience. It is more certain evidence of intelligence sometimes to believe some things than it is to attempt to explain them. We do not explain the cross; we believe it. The cross was an experience before it was an explanation. Experience tells us several things about the cross.

1. *It is the voice of God speaking in tragedy.* To be sure, God does not institute tragedy in order to speak. God permits tragedy in order to teach. Man creates tragedy, and God speaks through it. "Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee." (Psa. 76:10). The crucifixion of Christ is the supreme tragedy, and it was instituted by men. Great ideals, great convictions and great institutions are usually born in tragedy. The best in art and music often comes out of tragedy. The Christian faith was born in tragedy. The Christian Church was born in tragedy. The blood of the martyr has been the seed of both the Christian way of life and the Church.

In the cross God speaks His mind concerning sin and grace. "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" This is the voice of forgiveness and the call to repentance. This is an experience, not an

explanation. Here at the cross men must hear the call to repentance and the offer of gracious forgiveness. Men must not stumble at the cross if they would win the crown. Indeed, it is the voice of God speaking in tragedy.

2. *It is God's best coming into the world's worst.* These words are not new; they have been spoken before. It may not be theologically correct to speak of "God's best" in as much as everything in God is "perfect." God is the personification of superlative excellence. In God there is no "good, better, best." In God there is only perfection. However, in order that we may better appreciate the meaning of the cross we may rightly say that in the cross of Christ, in some mysterious way, the best in God comes into the worst in man. The best in God is love, and the worst is the lack of it. It was in the cross that love and the lack of love met, and love won. It is in the cross that the white hand of God clasped the black hand of man. This is an experience, not an explanation.

3. *It is the conviction of what I am and the visions of what I ought to be.* Nor are these words new; they have been spoken before by others. When the centurion looked upon the crucified on the cross he was stricken with fear, and he cried out: "*Truly this was the Son of God.*" (Mt. 27:54). A look at him on the cross brings conviction to a man because of what he is, and it brings a vision of what he ought to be. Standing about the cross we see the kind of persons that we are. On the cross we see the kind of person that we ought to be. Around the cross are sinful men. On the cross is a forgiving man. Around the cross is the commission of sin. On the cross is forgiveness of sin. This is an experience, not an explanation.

4. *It is the end of the man who was, and the appearance of the man whom God meant.* The man who comes earnestly to the cross can not go away and ever again be the same man. In some mysterious way the man's inner life is changed; his purpose is changed, and his loyalties are changed. It was at the cross, even before that cross was a historic reality, that the tax-gathering Levi, the Publican, came to an end, and Matthew the gospel writer appeared. The man Saul of Tarsus who left Jerusalem for Damascus on a mission of persecution never reached Damascus at all. The man Saul met the crucified out there in the desert, and Saul of Tarsus came to an end, and Saint Paul appeared. It was Saint Paul who finally came to Damascus, and not Saul of Tarsus. It is in the cross that men cease to be what they are and enter the process of becoming what they ought to be. This is not an explanation. This is an experience.

CONCLUSION

And so, indeed, it is true: it is not possible to put the oceanic mysteries of the cross into the tin cup of human reason. Nevertheless, with all the deep mysteries of God in the cross of Christ experience teaches us that the cross is an event in human history; it is a faith in Christian theology; it is an interpretation in Christian philosophy, and it is an experience in our religion.

It is evident that the cross does mark the end of some long roads and the beginning of new roads. In that cross the Eternal God speaks in tragedy. In that cross we have the conviction of what we are and the vision of what we ought to be, and in that cross the man who was ceases to be and the man who ought to be appears. This is the great mystery of the cross.

COMPENDIUM

Briefly, then this is my thesis in this course of lectures: The truth on which the Christian faith is founded is eternal and indestructible, but our faith in that truth may be shattered and destroyed. The Christian faith will not remain and survive inevitably. That faith must be promoted. "We are laborers together with God." It is God's to ordain the truth. It is ours to "go teach all nations."

The Christian faith is a faith that can not be kept unless we are active in giving it away. A paradox indeed! "For whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's," says Jesus, "the same shall save it."

Our religious faith must be reasonable, and to be reasonable it must be intellectually respectable, emotionally sound, and volitionally dynamic. This means that we need a gospel that reveals the character, the purpose and the will of God. It means that we need a Messiah who can bring us freedom, security and peace through the redemption of the human mind, the human heart and the human will. It means that we must have a Christ who is adequate for such a world as this, one who approaches men from the inside with truth, love and purpose. It means a faith that places God in the center of every day life and gives peace, purpose and power. Finally, it means a cross to which we need add nothing, a cross that brings an end to the man of sin and brings in the man that God meant. It means a cross that puts an end to the world that has been, and brings in the world that ought to be.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

